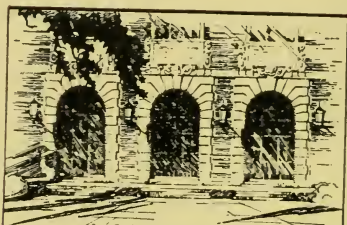
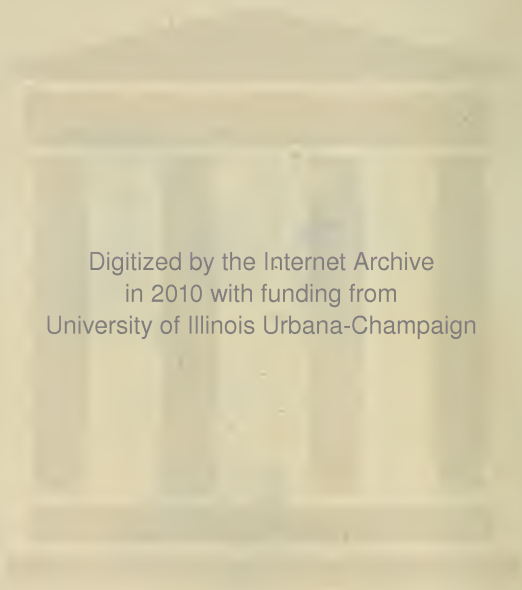


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THE
MISERIES OF AN HEIRESS.

A NOVEL.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street,

Eliza Giffard & *Sergius*
THE *Flintshire*
MISERIES OF AN HEIRESS.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY
ANTHONY FREDERICK HOLSTEIN,

AUTHOR OF

*SIR OWEN GLENDOWR; THE ASSASSIN OF ST. GLENROY;
LOVE, MYSTERY, AND MISERY, &c.*

I boast no tale in magic wonders rife;
But yet familiar, is there nought to prize,
O, Nature! in thy bosom-scenes of life?

CAMPBELL.

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1810.



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THE

MISERIES OF AN HEIRESS.

CHAP. I.

A soul without reflection, like a pile
Without inhabitant, to ruin runs.

* * * * *

For round my head
The wreath of hope is wither'd—dead!

MISS PYE.

Retrospective View of the Family of Eddermore.

PUNCTUAL to the moment, Lady Zitella Herbert met her uncle; and, as she had intended, entered with respectful deference into the cause which had influenced her to seek this conference. She pointed out the

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dangers

dangers of his present situation, and the probable effects which would result from a perseverance in error; and then reverting to what she had overheard relative to pecuniary embarrassments, professed both her ability and inclination to afford him aid, in this moment of distress; but was interrupted, by his acknowledgments for intended kindness, which he confessed he had anticipated, but, so far from feeling the least desire to benefit by her offer, he had put it beyond his own power to trespass on her liberality, by an oath, mentally uttered, that no circumstance should induce him to accept pecuniary assistance from her hand; and concluded by adding, that he foresaw, with pain, the necessity of a compliance, without further delay, with the promise she had given a dying mother.

He proceeded to say, he viewed her as a sacred charge, delegated to him by a sister, whom he had affectionately loved; and that, whatever might have been the errors
of

of his past, present, or future life, they would never, he was convinced, attach to any neglect of the duties of the guardian and relative situation in which he stood to the daughter of this unfortunate and regretted sister. Under this impression, he conceived it necessary to point out to her consideration, that an establishment more consonant to her birth and education, ought to be acquired; he was aware that his house did not afford her that respectable asylum, which, under other circumstances, it might have done; and, with anguished feeling, he acknowledged the dread he now felt to see his beautiful wife enter that society to which he had raised her; that her presence was now only productive of agony to him, annoyance to herself, and food of derision to the unfeeling and unworthy.

This last was too distressing a theme to bear expatiation; and he again turned to the hope of a connubial alliance between his ward and the heir of Somerton. But

this was a hapless alternative, for here he unfortunately once more touched the note of discord.

Zitella had but too plainly seen the real object of devotion to the heart of Craven ; and as all hope of Molesworth faded from contemplation, she implored her uncle not to pursue the subject, but, on the contrary, leave it perfectly undiscussed, for reasons that would not, at this moment, bear investigation. He acquiesced, without a single observation ; for, engrossed by his own opinions, he became insensible to any other.

Our heroine had concluded this conference, when a servant placed in her hand a letter, just delivered by a groom of Lord Arthur Craven's. She retired instantly to her own chamber, and, with some trepidation, proceeded to examine its contents.

They briefly stated, that his past attentions must have prepared her for at least one part of his letter ; for the evidence of his strong respect, regard, and admiration, had

had consequently, no doubt, led to the belief that proposals of marriage were likely to follow. Such were, in fact, his intentions, and that no woman stood higher upon this ground with him; but the unexpected rencontre of that evening had drawn aside a veil, rather prematurely, and anticipated a discovery, he should, at no distant period, have conceived himself bound in honour to have communicated. He acknowledged, in terms of strong feeling, his uncontrollable passion for Mrs. Stavenant; obliquely hinting, that it had been fostered under peculiar and inexplicable circumstances; but that, as a married woman, and more particularly the wife of a dear and valued friend, she would ever, in his eyes, be sacred; that, by avoiding the possibility of again meeting her, he rested on time, and the strength of his own principles, to annihilate this bane of his repose; that his inclinations led him to domestic life; and, in our heroine, he conceived he had discovered all that would

contribute to render it most attractive, all that would eventually secure his affections; professed that his heart was now submitted to her view; and concluded, by making her unequivocally an offer of his hand.

There was a sincerity, strength of feeling, and firmness of principle, expressed in this letter, which increased our heroine's admiration and esteem for the native character of Lord Arthur; but while she regarded him with the interest of a friend, and paid the tribute of tears to his unfortunate attachment for the wedded Maria, she yet felt that she could never accept any man as a husband, whose heart did not ratify the marriage-vow; and once assured that *affection* did not prompt the attentions of Craven, her determination was promptly taken to negative proposals uninfluenced by love.

Acute feelings, and an inherent pride from nature, propelled this resolution of the orphan, while prudential reason attempted not to war with such powerful antagonists.

antagonists. A reply, correspondent to her sentiments, was dispatched, in the course of the day, to his Lordship's house; and once more our heroine returned to those painful reflections on the conduct of Mr. Nugent, which the latter incident had, for a time, diverted into another channel.

Mr. Nugent dined out *à l'ordinaire*, and Fanny appeared melancholy and dejected, when she met our heroine at table, for she was now fully sensible of the indifference with which she was regarded by her husband, while her own affections seemed perceptibly lessened by the discovery; yet although the once humble cottager had a feeling heart, it failed in those delicate fibres from which we derive our most painful sense of suffering. Awakened gratitude towards the nabob had been undermined, by the homage of lavish commendation and profession of those libertine admirers to whom her personal charms had rendered her an object of attraction, and now more particularly by the insidious and artful

Horton. He had painted her beauty in such glowing colours, and so highly estimated its power and influence, that vanity readily caught the infectious blaze of flattery; and she now began to conceive her own elevation, by the marriage of Nugent, but as the natural consequence of her own perfections.

Gratitude had fostered the birth of love in the bosom of Fanny, for her erring husband individually; the passion was weak and fragile, and, divested of its original support, it was but too likely to moulder into decay, and eventually suffer annihilation.

Mrs. Nugent soon dried her tears, and lost, in the gay fascinations of admiration, the tender remembrance of him she had once loved as a benefactor, still more than a husband.

Zitella accompanied her not abroad this evening, but was forced to appear at the supper-table at home; for the weak and thoughtless beauty had been accompanied
on

on her return by a party of gentlemen, invited to the evening board ; and among them was the despicable Horton. Our orphan, with anxious alarm, now received confirmation of her former fears, in regard to his libertine attentions. There was a confidence in his manner, a familiarity of admiration, when he addressed the wife of her uncle, that were calculated to alarm and shock the delicate feelings of her young guest.

At three, the party separated, and, with a heavy heart, the unfortunate heiress sought her pillow, but with no hope of benefitting by the influence of sleep.

As the clock struck six, and not until then, she distinguished the step of Nugent ascending the stairs. He was just returned home, and, as Zittella but too justly apprehended, from the house of Lady Ann Leigh.

After hours of mature reflection on the impropriety of her present asylum, our orphan deemed it most advisable to seek a

private interview with Lady Darnford, conscious that from her she might gain ample information, on the painful subject which now more particularly oppressed her. The Countess never hesitated in the communication of unpleasant truths; but, however unpleasant they might be, Zitella was aware that the truth was ever salutary, and never more so than at this moment. The judgment of the Dowager was often harshly correct; but it was seldom erring. Her young connexion was conscious she could not, as a worldly instructor, have one more able nor more inclined to extend admonition; for delicacy, or refinement of feeling, where others were concerned, never barred its utterance; and disagreeable advice the Countess was ever willing to afford.

On the subject of her unpleasant, and now apparently dangerous situation, as the guest of the ignorant Fanny, and her now dissipated husband, Lady Zitella had nothing to reveal, for the searching optics of the Countess had long made the discovery; and

and she would have treated any attempt to conceal the mortification and distress attendant upon such an asylum, with all the derision and bitter irony of her callous habits.

After breakfast, therefore, the next morning, our orphan proceeded to Great Cumberland-Place. Upon inquiry from her servant, if the Dowager was at home, the porter replied in the negative; but added, his Lady had given him orders to say, if Lady Zitella Herbert called, she was anxious to see her, and would not be absent long, if it were convenient for her Ladyship to remain until the return of the Countess.

Our heiress willingly assented, and was shown into a room, to wait the re-appearance of the Dowager. The day was uncommonly sultry, it being now the commencement of June; and throwing open a sash of one of the windows, she seated herself near it, and remained buried in re-

flection. The time did not appear tedious, for, in fact, it passed unheeded.

In about an hour the Countess entered; but she had evidently not been informed of the arrival of Lady Zitella, nor even observed her in the room, as she threw herself, with listless inanity, under a canopied sofa, exclaiming, at the same moment, "How heavy are now the days of existence! how has one fatal attachment debased the nature of the once estimable Sophia Howard! Gracious God, what a horrid monster is she now!"

Zitella arose, in trembling agitation; and, approaching her, involuntarily repeated, "Lady Darnford!"

"Heavens! your Ladyship here!—Methinks, young lady, you might have informed me of our vicinity, and not thus have stolen '*the secrets of my prison-house!*'"

Tears started into the eyes of our orphan; the miserable Countess stood revealed; and
even

even the rude, severe rebuke just uttered, could not turn the current of commiseration.

“ Be assured, I did not mean to *steal* confidence ; and the words unguardedly uttered will be as safe as if yet lodged in your Ladyship’s bosom only.”

“ Weep not for me,” replied the Dowager, recovering her usually stern and unmoved countenance—“ I hate the tearful tribute which pity gives ; I loath its essence ; it cannot bind the festered wounds of such a soul as mine.”

“ They were the involuntary tribute of sympathy ; and if *pity* were connected, it found entrance under another form.”

“ *Sympathy* my nature, such as it now is, does not acknowledge, for it stands alone in creation, nor has ever yet met with a correspondent heart—*Heart*, did I say?—No ; I have now no heart. I have given it to the winds ; I have chased it, even as the unrelenting ruthless hunter pursues to destruction the weeping deer.—Zitella, will
you

you believe the tale?—Once this bosom contained a heart fraught with warm affections. Virtue delighted there to dwell; and fate, for a time, shed its sunshine on my head. In an unlooked-for moment, a serpent stung me; my blood received a poisonous taint, and from this deadly wound, venom has never ceased to flow.”

“ No, Lady Darnford, no; the heart, susceptible from nature, may, for a time, be clothed in frigidity, nay, even in misanthropic guise, when misfortune, such as that you hint at, has assailed it; but the leaven of human kindness cannot be extinct. Foster it with genial warmth, and suffer the long-smothered embers to revive. I, as well as you, have known the bitterness of disappointment; and though our feelings may not coalesce, yet——”

“ Never! never! Apathy is now my only source of peace. Friendship! love! I would know you no more. As beauty’s foe alone, I could rouse my soul to action. —Zitella, if, at this moment, you would
have

have me an ally, and save you from the malevolent strictures of the world, conceal from me a face clad in loveliness, a form adorned with attractive charms. I sicken at these distinctions, for they have undone me. I recoil intuitively from their possessor. Had this magnetic beauty never appeared on earth, to fetter the soul of man with ignoble chains, Sophia had never known contempt, aversion! When fate pronounced that bitter verdict on my head, *hate* took possession of my breast for all of beauty's race, and disgust for those who bowed to the senseless idol. But hear me, Lady Zitella, ere retrospection seal my lips, and suspend the admonitory caution—not as a friend, for I do not profess the distinction, but a senior connexion—I recommend you most strenuously to quit the house of your guardian. When he permits a young and lovely ward to visit beneath the roof of his favourite mistress, a woman whose reputation he has himself contributed to

destroy,

destroy, surely he proves himself no longer her protector?"

"Gracious Heaven, my dear Madam, what do you mean to insinuate?"

"I *insinuate* nothing," replied the Countess coldly; "I never descend to oblique reflections; I would say *all*, and then I shall say nothing new, nothing strange."

"Can this be possible? Can the brother of my mother subject her orphan to the suspicion which must attach to such a circumstance? Can a husband be thus regardless of the purity of his wife, of his own honour?"

"His *actions* answer your queries fully," replied Lady Darnford; "therefore I need not offer a reply."

And, folding her arms, the Dowager threw herself back on the sofa, with an air of cruel indifference to the pain she had inflicted. A pause ensued, at length broken by Zitella.

"I can only conclude, my Lady, that the
female

female in question is Lady Ann Leigh, at whose house I have only once been."

"I did not suppose you could possibly draw a wrong conclusion," was the reply.

"Then I can indeed, and with no small satisfaction, fully acquit my uncle of blame, as far as relates to myself, since he knew not of the circumstance. He was ignorant even of the intention. I went in pursuance of an arrangement made for me by Mrs. Nugent, that——"

"Pardon me the interruption; but I cannot forbear acknowledging the discovery of a new virtue in your Ladyship's catalogue of perfections—humility! yes, humility in the extreme, when you thus bow your own powers of discrimination, and act upon the superior judgment of the all-qualified *protégée* of my recent acquaintance, *Farmer Dobbins*."

"Excuse me, Lady Darnford; but my *humility* does not extend so far as to submit, even from your lips, to hear the wife of my uncle so frequently treated with
unmerited

unmerited contempt; and your Ladyship will confer on me a personal obligation, by recollecting that the *protégée* of Mrs. Vincent is not only in herself an estimable being, but is, by the tie of marriage, raised in society to the level of a *gentlewoman*."

"I admire your Ladyship's charity, forbearance, and meek forgiving spirit! They shine particularly distinguished in the present instance, since you, who have most severely suffered by the Yorkshire romance, are the only individual who have spoken in its favour: but I really understand the now elevated little maid of the farm is inclined to go a step beyond the mere *gentlewoman*, and become a fashionist, under the tuition of Sir Edward Horton. However, *n'emporte*, take a lesson in the school of experience; it is a seminary whose portals are open to all, and entered by most."

Zitella, wholly overcome by the scene of the morning, now felt her spirits give way to the cruel attack of the merciless
Countess;

Countess; but, essaying to rally them, she failed in the attempt, and, entirely subdued, burst into tears.

The severity of the Dowager was softened—a severity which had been heightened by the encomium passed on her lovely rival; for it was there, and there alone, perhaps, that the heart of her Ladyship was now accessible to feeling. She represented to our orphan, in more appropriate language and manner, the many improprieties in the conduct of the ignorant Fanny, and the devotion of Nugent to the gaming-table, which the fascinations of Lady Ann Leigh had been exerted to produce, by drawing him to her house, where high play was suffered and encouraged, to the most notorious excess of any private mansion in the metropolis. Our heroine now, for the first time, learned that the female who had been the companion of her father, in his desertion of an amiable and exemplary wife, was no other than the aunt of this lady, and the mother of Morris, who, after
a life

a life passed in the most depraved excesses of vice, was now reduced to the miseries of abject penury ; and but for the assistance of that son, whom she had abandoned in the earliest stage of existence, would now have been destitute of a roof under which to shelter her wretched self.

The senior Mr. Morris had been a man neither of strong feelings nor affections. The elopement of his lady had affected him not, save as a stab to his honour ; and circumstance having led to a doubt of the legitimacy of his youngest son, the poor poet we have before introduced, he had entirely cast off the innocent offender. Lord Eddermore had been moved to some compassion for the unfortunate child, and had received him beneath his own roof ; but without sufficient delicacy or generosity to regard him as any other than a mere humble dependant.

The tale of honest Jacob, on the Dorset road, respecting the attachment of Morris for his cousin, was correct ; but not equally

so in respect to a father's compulsory mandate having consigned her to the arms of Mr. Leigh, who possessed a lucrative situation under government, in one of its foreign departments. Lady Ann Eddermore had, in fact, possessed none of those virtues with which the blind attachment of the unfortunate Morris had decked her character. Love she was not capable of feeling, and had only amused herself in the conquest of the heart of this ill-fated young man, by fanning, with artful encouragement, hopes she never meant to realise; and this was the entertainment of some vacant hours, passed in a retired country-mansion of the Earl's, when his Lordship was confined with a fit of the gout, and which served to divert her from *ennui*. The wedded life of Lady Ann Leigh had been correspondent with this cruel action; she had first figured as the married flirt, to finally sink into the despicable demirep and female gamester.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Towards the dark gulf, that opens on my sight,
I hurried forward, Passion's helpless slave,
And, scorning Reason's mild and sober light,
Pursued the path that leads me to the grave.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

I'm now turn'd wild, a commoner of nature,
Of all forsaken, and forsaking all.

DRYDEN.

A Scene of Mortality.

THE conversation of Lady Darnford had been singularly impressive, when the companions were mutually astonished by loud and incessant knocking at the hall-door, as of some one impatient for admission.

—"We

—“ We shall not be interrupted,” said the Countess, mournfully—“ I had intended to devote this morning to other pursuits, save that of casual visitors; and, your Ladyship excepted, no other will find entrance.”

A servant appeared, and, in hurried accents, requested his Lady’s attention to an unfortunate intruder, who professed an earnest desire to see her immediately.

The Countess waved her hand.—“ See that my orders are obeyed: I will not be thus broken in upon.”

The servant respectfully withdrew, and closed the door. Again were voices heard.—“ The poor child wishes to see young Madam Herbert, and I will tell her so myself—that I will, if I die for it.”

“ Heavens!” cried the alarmed Zitella, starting from her seat—“ the voice is surely that of Farmer Dobbins. What can have happened?”

“ Doubtless the happy arrival of another of the Yorkshire squad.”

Again the servant appeared.—“ Some-
thing

thing of importance has occurred, my Lady, and a Mr. Dobbins insists upon admission."

"Shew him up then," cried the Dowager, in a tone of alarm.

And the next moment the honest farmer entered, who, with blunt agitated manner, exclaimed, "The poor 'Squire is killed among 'em! They were all at their card-doings, and he caught one of 'em cheating, as he thought, and he roundly told him so; and t'other man flung the cards at him; and so they went out, with swords and pistols, and all that; and 'Squire Nugent was brought home, covered with blood, and is dead, to my thinking, by this time."

"Gracious God, support me!" ejaculated Lady Darnford, as the colour fled her countenance; pale, convulsed, and lifeless, she sunk back on the sofa.

The terrified Zitella screamed for help: Farmer Dobbins, unconscious of the mischief he had effected, readily afforded it, and, raising the senseless Dowager in his arms,

arms, bore her to an open window. Further aid was summoned; and returning life banishing present apprehensions here, the thoughts of Zitella rushed back to the dreadful tidings which had produced the effect, and, motioning to the hapless har-binger to quit the room, she prepared herself to follow him; but the wretched invalid arrested her purpose.

“Repeat the tale, my friend; my nerves are sufficiently firm now to listen. Are you *sure* that your information is true?”

“Why, what use would there be in telling a story about it?” cried the literal Dobbins—“I am very sure, for I saw him myself. The blood ran in streams down his side, and the doctors could not stop it; and so——”

“Enough, enough!” cried the agitated girl—“Oh let me hasten to him!” and, turning towards Lady Darnford, she beheld all the traits of former severity subdued. Uncontrolled grief had taken possession of every feature, and, bursting into an agony

of tears, she exclaimed, ‘ Zitella, these are the first softened drops of sorrow which have chased my cheeks for fifteen years. I had supposed my heart shut from the whole human race; but it were vain to deny it now; I have afforded proof, both to you and myself, who were alike, perhaps, ignorant of it, that inconstancy, contempt, nay, *hatred*, have failed to eradicate an early attachment.—Ah, Robert, loved companion of my childish youth, the cruel foe of my maturer years, thy loss, in death, could alone wrest tears from the proud Sophia!—Go, Zitella,” she added, observing her detention from compassion to herself —“ Heed me not; I have learnt to suffer. Your uncle needs a comforter, a supporter, in this trying, awful moment, far more than I. My feelings are better calculated for privacy than sympathy. Farewell; and mention not my wretched unfortunate self, I charge you.”

Our agitated orphan, under the protection of the ill-omened messenger, arrived
at

at Park-lane. The surgeons had just quitted the wounded man, who refused to take the composing draught ordered, until he had seen his niece.

Zitella entered ; but grew faint at the awfully impressive scene before her. The profusion of blood which had issued from the hapless Nugent, had overspread his countenance with the ghastly hue of death ; and that he breathed, appeared all the symptom exhibited of that existence which seemed but to hover over him. His weeping wife knelt by his side, and, in all the terror such a scene could inflict, was bewailing, in loudest accents, that they had not secured the murderer of her husband.

The dying man extended his hand to the trembling orphan.—“ My dear Zitella, you are but just arrived in time to receive my parting adieu. My attendants fear to announce my doom ; but I feel it to be inevitable. You have no cause for the affliction your countenance marks. You have only known to despise me. In my

untimely fate, you can only trace a direful moral of the effects of uncontrolled passions—one who, in the erring banishment of reason, had debased his feelings, and sunk the gifts of nature, the endowments of education, into oblivion—who has lived the sensualist, the gamester, and, goaded yet further by passion, has, as a duellist, met a merited fate—who, in the mercy of the Divinity, and not the verdict of retributive justice, dare look forward, as the penitent, to an Almighty God—a God that my heart, amid all its wanderings, has ever with reverence acknowledged.—Interrupt me not, dear girl—these fleeting moments are all I can call my own—to-morrow, and it may be too late!—This guileless child of nature, my poor Fanny, will be surrounded by dangers. Shield her credulity from imposition. She is very lovely,” he added, turning his eyes towards his beautiful wife, “very young, and every way unfit for the situation in which she will soon be left. Her jointure will, for her,

her, be ample ; but it is now all that is left of my so late splendid fortune. Prevail upon her to go down, as soon as I am no more, to her early friends in Yorkshire. The good farmer is yet in town : detain him until then. He has a son : that son was once fondly attached to my poor Fanny. Ill-judged kindness separated them.—Spare me the rest—to you I am intelligible.—“Do not reply, my dear girl,” he added, tenderly pressing the hand of the weeping Mrs. Nugent—“I know what you would say ; but my present state admits not of conversation. These are my wishes. Fulfil them, if you can, for they are calculated to promote your future happiness.—Zitella, you have yet a guardian, delegated by your mother—one more worthy of the sacred charge than her unfortunate erring brother ; but life is precarious, and secret grief, I am told, has threatened no distant termination of his. Delay not, then, my sweet girl, to gain a lasting protector. The situation of an heiress is a perilous

one, and you require an early guardian for life. May your election produce not that mortification, disgust, and indifference, which must ever be the portion of that individual who marries to gratify a mere personal attachment, unsanctioned by mind, or correspondent refinement. From these unequal, ill-accordant connexions, flow the too certain produce of matrimonial misery, of wedded inconstancy. Heaven has ordained respective stations to the children of earth; and we seldom, with impunity, leap those barriers, when solely influenced and actuated by passionate inclinations, unsanctioned by reason. The wild flower, of rustic birth, was never found or intended to thrive in the hot-bed of luxury: its colours fade in the ungenial climate, and, injudiciously transplanted, languishes for its native air.—But I am faint—I can no longer speak, without increased difficulty, nor even now say all I wish; I therefore submit to the medical prescription, and I will endeavour to resume the
subject,

subject, when better enabled to pursue it."

But, alas! the anodyne was in vain administered; life receded apace; and ere the morning dawned, the hapless Nugent was no more.

* * * * *

The funeral obsequies were conducted with a respect better suited to the rank of the deceased, than his present circumstances, under the immediate direction of his niece, who defrayed every attendant expence.

Zitella now felt considerable distress, from her total ignorance of the present situation of Lord Edgeworth, or even as of what part of England he was now an inhabitant, as many weeks had elapsed since she, or indeed any other person, had heard tidings of him; he had then professed his determination to pursue and regain his child from the protection of her mother; but as his absence from Heath House was uncertain as to its duration, from the recent

unexpected event, he had empowered his banker to supply her, on demand, with whatever money she might require, and referred her to Mr. Nugent, in every other point of moment which might occur, wherein she would require advice or protection ; but, alas ! death had wrested from her that guardian, and she was now compelled to exert her own energies, for the necessary arrangements, as Mrs. Nugent was too ignorant and uninformed to assist in the smallest matter of consequence, even for herself.

Thus situated, she accepted, most gratefully, the pressing invitation of Dr. Moreland to visit Sudley Hall. He wrote an affectionate letter, couched to that effect, immediately upon receiving intelligence of the death of Mr. Nugent, and was only prevented, by a severe fit of the gout, from instantly repairing to London, and himself convey her into Dorsetshire ; but as this was impossible, he had delegated the Dean of L—— his representative, and to his
care

care confided the charge of his amiable friend, should she incline accordance to the wishes of his family, and once more become a member of it.

We will pass over the effect of the melancholy event we have just recorded, on the minds of those immediately connected with the deceased, as being tedious to the reader, and unimportant to our history.

Mrs. Nugent, whose once sincere regard for her husband had been, for some months, gradually weaning, exhibited, if not ardent affection, at least a tender and grateful remembrance of former kindness, and readily acquiesced in every arrangement Lady Zitella had formed for her comfort, upon the hints thrown out by her late uncle.

Viewing the worthy, although unpolished Farmer Dobbins, with a regard truly filial, Fanny had fortunately, at this period, not sufficient observation to contrast his man-

ners with those of that more refined society in which she had lately mixed ; and, perhaps, if she had, would, from the association of early habits and pursuits, have preferred the honest good-humoured conversation and blunt affectionate address of her early friend, to the more refined vivacity of a cultivated mind, or even to the soothing tenderness of our really kind orphan.

Vanity was prominent in the bosom of Mrs. Nugent ; but no spurious pride had arisen from her sudden elevation ; and although the former might have been gratified by the flattery of Sir Edward Horton, and other distinguished admirers, yet her heart was in reality much more likely to become affected by the untutored genuine language of nature, in the commendations of her first lover, the really estimable Giles, whose affection had stood the test of time and absence, nor had renounced its object, even when that object had deserted him, for
a speculative

a speculative voyage, and had eventually nearly forgotten him, in the arms of another.

Consigning her once more to the Yorkshire boundary, and seen her safely conveyed by the worthy Dobbins to his flourishing farm, we leave her in the bosom of this family, consisting of the farmer and his sister, with her two daughters and his own son, while we return to our more distinguished, and perhaps somewhat more melancholy orphan.

Previous to her quitting the metropolis, she had received intimation of a visit from the Countess of Darnford; and she suffered much from the thought of meeting with this unfortunate woman, for the first time after the recent source of their mutual affliction; but the interview could not be evaded, or even postponed; and she therefore prepared her mind for its encounter.

Three weeks had materially altered the person of the Countess; her imperious air

was resigned; but, in its place, was substituted a frigid austerity, that repelled every attempt at cordiality.

The tears of Zitella flowed at the recollection of the melancholy scene which had intervened since they had last met; but the eyes of her visitor afforded no sympathetic dew; they were dim, but certainly not from tears; it appeared rather to proceed from a want of "*nature's sweet restorer.*"

Our heroine wiped from her cheeks the traces of sorrow, and, turning the conversation upon her meditated departure, thanked Lady Darnford for the kindness of those frequent inquiries which had evinced an interest in her present affliction.

"Your thanks, Lady Zitella, I cannot claim, for they are unmerited. My inquiries were not those of an anxious friend; they were due to our relative situations, and as such accorded. I have already told you, that the blight which withered my early hopes had also annihilated all my
other

other affections; and my soul, brooding over the past, has refused the admission of another to partake its feelings. They have been long condensed in *self*; perhaps they never were otherwise: certain it is, that they never protruded to any, but him who rejected them; and they are now for ever buried in the grave of Robert——” Her voice paused, but did not falter as she pronounced the name.

Our heroine gazed upon the extraordinary being who had made this strange avowal; but, compassionating her, who really possessed this singular contradiction of apparent feeling and apathy, she suppressed an observation which had risen to her lips, and now hinted her anxiety to reach the country.

“ I too shall quit this busy theatre,” returned the Countess, “ and pass the remainder of my days far distant from this spot, the scene of my budding hopes, the grave of every worldly tie. To solitude
I dedicate

I dedicate the future, and shall exist in a living sepulchre, '*unknowing and unknown.*'"

"And there," replied Zitella, "I hope and believe you will recover, in a great measure, your tranquillity. Unrepining acquiescence to the decrees of Heaven, and active benevolence towards your indigent fellow-creatures, will, I trust, illumine the hitherto gloomy atmosphere of your life, while time, operating its usual effects, may eventually restore to your bosom content, if not happiness."

"No such visionary scene gilds my horizon," returned the Countess, with coldness.—"I feel no interest in my fellow-mortals, and leave to my successor what pleasure may be derived from benevolence; my bosom is closed to her claims, and I shall collect around me only those who may be useful, and, in consideration of pecuniary reward, permit me unmolested to pursue my course, nor disturb the sullen habits of my solitary existence.—Adieu,

Lady

Lady Zitella, for in this world we meet no more!"

Slowly rising, she drew her veil across her face, and had quitted the room, ere her companion was scarcely conscious of her intention.

CHAP. III.

“ True love's the gift which God has giv'n
To man alone beneath the Heav'n :
It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind.”

The Indian Voyage.

THE same day on which Fanny had departed for Yorkshire, our orphan bade adieu to the metropolis, and, accompanied by Dr. Ancaster, set out for Sudley Hall, in Dorsetshire.

The Dean appeared unusually dejected ; and the spirits of Lady Zitella were yet under melancholy influence. Nearly half
an,

an hour had passed, with only a forced attempt at conversation, ill supported by either. As the carriage rolled on, and the noise of its rapid movement over the stones had ceased, he appeared somewhat recalled to himself, and, taking the hand of Zitella, he requested the liberty of speaking to her, with the sincerity of a confidential friend.

Our heroine readily acquiesced, and confessed herself even flattered by the wish thus expressed; for she viewed the reverend divine as an exemplary husband, an affectionate father, and a moral, if not a very religious member of society.

“It is a delicate point on which I venture to address you; but, having obtained permission from your Ladyship, I will not delay it. Do you then, my young friend, remember a conversation which occurred between us, many weeks since, in regard to a suspected attachment formed between Clarence Molesworth and my little Marian?”

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The reply was affirmative, although not unembarrassed.

“ You, at that time, Lady Zitella, if I recollect aright, viewed him as a distinguished and amiable youth; you spoke even much in his commendation.”

Our orphan coloured; she hesitated; but at length rejoined:—“ From the opinion of those judicious friends on whom I relied, I could not be otherwise than favourably impressed; and on their judgment and discrimination I rested my belief: consequently, I concluded, from their suffrage, that Miss Ancaster had been peculiarly fortunate in having possessed herself of the affections of a man so much esteemed by all her connexions, so highly valued by her father.”

“ You couple their names, my dear Lady Zitella, under erroneous impressions. Our fancied scheme of matrimony there has proved a *mère chimera*.”

Zitella started, but dared not trust her voice to reply.

“ And yet, so prone is imagination to
indulge

indulge in visionary projects, that no sooner is one annihilated, than I have sought to interest myself in another, which eventually, I hope, may be somewhat more fortunate."

The Dean paused; but still his young companion was silent, and turned her face involuntarily from the penetrating survey of the reverend divine.

"Pardon me, Lady Zitella; and if you conceive my conduct obtrusive, unauthorized, believe me, it is actuated by a sense of justice, a wish to offer all the reparation it may ever be in my power to grant to this unfortunate young man."

"*Reparation!*" re-echoed the former, with astonishment.

"Yes, *reparation*, for guilt hangs heavy at my heart; it poisons the happiness of my wedded life, it embitters the otherwise unalloyed draught of felicity, for I deserve not the blessings I enjoy."

"You shock and alarm me!" replied his auditor—"I cannot have heard aright—that

that *guilt* does in reality attach to the Dean of L——! Surely there must be some mitigating circumstance, which allows a softer term—which reduces its actual existence?”

“No, no,” said Ancaster, with a settled dejection of countenance and manner, “there are no mitigating circumstances. I have acted like a villain; I cannot longer conceal from myself my own criminality; yet, for the sake of him whom I have so deeply injured, I would proclaim, even now, the fatal truth; I would become the champion of this unfortunate—but an oath, an oath on which the fame, nay, I believe, the life of another rests, seals my lips, and Molesworth must be the victim.—Oh Charles, unhappy, ill-fated Charles! thy fate rests on my head. I conspired to sink thee into the gloomy abyss.”

Zitella shuddered.—“Gracious God! what conclusion can I form?”

“Form none, for mercy’s sake!” exclaimed Ancaster, with breathless haste, grasping

grasping her hand with firmness—"I knew not what I uttered. The sentences were involuntary, inadvertent; they sprang from a distempered mind." And again he sunk back in the carriage exhausted, and was soon lost in retrospective thought, while his astonished and terrified companion contemplated him in silence.

At length, once more arousing, he repeated, "Lady Zitella, I have it perhaps now in my power to aid this unfortunate young man, in the most eventful incident of his life, by an endeavour to promote the secret wishes of his heart. But I will proceed more methodically, since the matter is of considerable moment.—Three days past, I unexpectedly found myself *tête-à-tête* with Molesworth, at his lodgings; and remarking, with pain, those indications of returning indisposition which had some time since alarmed his friends, I ventured to hint at the necessity of some attention being paid to those unpleasant symptoms.

With

With a gloomy smile, he confirmed my fears of illness; but, to my infinite surprise, announced his determination of immediately returning to Bengal.

“ I opposed the plan; I offered, as the ground of my argument, the decided opinion of his medical attendants, that the influence of the climate upon his now debilitated constitution would be certain death; but he was not to be swayed; he professed himself satisfied that his fate was inevitable; and whether it took place here or there, was immaterial. Finding all my arguments of no effect, I now determined to pursue a different road. I openly avowed my belief of *an attachment* as the real cause, while the reasons assigned were merely ostensible.

“ His agitation was now so great, that conviction forced itself, with resistless power, on my mind. I therefore stopt, and awaited his reply. He paced the room, in a manner that alarmed me, for so great was
his

his emotion, that I feared to proceed ; and yet considered that as the only course left for me to pursue.

‘ Be composed, my amiable young friend,’ I added—‘ The object of your affections is, I trust, worthy of the distinction. I believe I know her heart ; and am convinced it is as pure and unsophisticated as when immediately from the hand of nature.’

‘ I know it all,’ he replied, in a tremulous voice : ‘ but these perfections are not destined for me !’

‘ And why not ?’ I eagerly exclaimed—‘ Oh Molesworth, great are your claims on me ; and if your heart be indeed thus interested, do not hesitate to accept the felicity which awaits you.’

“ He shook his head.

‘ No, my friend, no ; she is as far above my deserts as my hopes. In silence, and at distance, will I bury this ill-fated, unconquerable affection ; for her contempt would be more than my fortitude could sustain.

sustain. Kindly, therefore, wave the conversation, and permit me to hope it may never be revived.'

' You estimate your own perfections too lightly, dear Molesworth; and, even in your own eyes, *fortune* alone could have presented itself as a barrier.'

' And an insurmountable one that will ever be,' he replied, with energy—' My affection would be subjected to suspicion, my tenderness, in her eyes, admit of doubt, and my devotion believed to be attached to her purse, and not herself. Oh, my good Dean, these impediments are *not* to be removed. She can only read my honest heart through the medium of *profession* by my *lips*; and upon this subject they are henceforth sealed for ever.'

" I extended my hand towards him.—
' A state of the heart of your fair conqueror, I acknowledge, is wholly unknown to me; but that I depute you to analyze; and, if satisfied in this particular, my ready assent to your happiness will, I trust, secure it.'

' Your

‘Your assent, my good Sir!’ he repeated, in astonished tone—‘Of whom have we been speaking?’

‘Doubtless of Marian Ancaster,’ I replied.

‘Oh Heaven!’ he exclaimed, ‘I caught a glimpse of happiness, only to render my despair more perfect. I doubted not that you understood me:—but the object of my adoration is Lady Zitella Herbert.’

The sentence of the Dean was arrested by the varying colour of his fair companion. He grasped her hand; it was cold; but she was saved from fainting, by a sudden burst of tears. They flowed for some moments unrepressed, till, with an April face, she apologised for the irrepressible emotion she had discovered, and imputed it to the present weak state of her nerves.

“You have no cause to blush, my amiable young friend, at having afforded me the evidence I sought. If I had not been assured on the one side, I never would have ungenerously betrayed the other; for

if accident, instead of design, had, at this moment, put me in possession of your sentiments, and I had remained ignorant of those of my ward, I would have concealed them as carefully as your own delicacy could have wished: but as matters are now circumstanced, it would be almost criminal to remain silent."

Zitella grasped his hand.—"My dear Sir, reflect, ere you resolve: this precipitate—" She paused, for articulation failed.

"Pardon me, my sweet friend, if I have been too abrupt, I would not indelicately seek to interfere obtrusively in so important a step. I am aware that you have a claim, in every respect, to a connexion, in worldly estimation, far more elevated; and if Lady Zitella Herbert is a convert, against my belief, to the politic doctrine, if she conceives the heart a bauble, when placed in competition with reciprocal rank and wealth, I would for ever be silent."

"No, my good Sir; believe me, these ignoble inclinations find no resting-place
in

in my bosom. I have felt, that those distinctions the world so highly prize are rather painful than pleasurable appendages; they have embittered the early days of my youth; and gladly would I renounce the too exuberant gifts of capricious fortune, for they have decked my brow with the willow, and plucked heart's-ease from the chaplet of spring, for the flowers purchased by wealth blossom not for me!"

Tears streamed down the cheeks of the heiress as she spoke, and suspicion closed the avenue of hope, even before the image of Clarence Molesworth.

"But the offering of love, Lady Zitella, will surely revive the drooping wreath; for if such be your sentiments, Clarence Molesworth has leapt the only difficulties which could intervene. He has a heart worthy of your's—a disposition, a mind formed to coalesce; but he is proud and tenacious. These passions, in his breast, however, proceed from a different source to that which yet produces similar fruit in

D 2

your's.

your's. He would shudder at the idea that you could, for an instant, doubt his affection; while he felt a dread of the possibility of your ascribing the declaration of it to a sinister motive: thus would you be for ever separated:—but I, who know you both, would become the interpreter. Remember that I am a father, and that I regard you as I would wish my own Marian to be regarded by another, under similar circumstances.”

“ Surely,” replied Zitella, “ the planet which governed the hour of my birth was indeed a wayward one; for, with every external appendage of lavish fortune, nature must have rendered me peculiarly susceptible of some impressions, which circumstance and maternal misery may have stamp'd with the seal of conviction. I do not mean to apply the observation to the case in point; far otherwise. I only mean to account for some events in my life, which may even have puzzled your philosophy,” added she, smiling; “ that the
embers

embers of distrust were fanned by the fears of a beloved mother, who having herself been a sacrifice to avarice, dreaded a similar fate to one far dearer: hence has my early days been embittered by the lessons thus inculcated. Accident has afforded me several opportunities, small, perhaps, in themselves, but, in the aggregate, important to me, as they have seemed to confirm erroneous conclusions as to my real sentiments; but whatever pride of birth I may really possess, yet, believe me, wealth weighs not a feather in the scale."

The Dean hastily interrupted her—"But *birth*, Lady Zitella—*birth*, if I understand you right, is *indispensable*?" and he fixed his eyes, with pained inquisitiveness, on her face.

"In truth," returned the orphan, "my personal requisites are so great, that I have no right to demand all the gifts of Heaven; and yet I would not connect myself with the *canaille*. But as there is little probability that such an event will occur," she

added, while her dimpled smile was only answered by a lengthened sigh from An-caster, "we will not now discuss that point.—And pardon me," she added, with heightened blushes, "if I now wave the conversation."

"I will not distress you by pressing the subject, then, further," he added—"Your own heart must dictate the result. In a few days, Molesworth will be at Sudley-Hall, to take leave of Mrs. Mulgrave, to whom he tenders this attention, as the very particular and highly-valued friend of Colonel Fullarton; and his fate will then rest with yourself; for if you extend the anchor of hope, the Indian voyage may yet be prevented. But, on the contrary, should propitious fortune not smile on his disinterested affections, he will, I am firmly convinced, consign himself to certain death, by encountering, in his present state of health, the hostile Asiatic clime; and I shall then, with anguish, endure the poignant reflection, that through me this unfortunate
young

young man has perished, in the spring of life—Great God, avert such an evil!”

A gloomy horror diffused itself over the countenance of Ancaster, and eloquently spoke in the successive pause.

The carriage soon after stopped, to change horses; and our heroine, alighting with the Dean, entered the inn while this was effected. The latter had just quitted her, to give some directions to a domestic, when a waiter returned with a note, which he said was sent from a lady, then in the house, and by whom he was desired to await an answer. The contents proved as follow:—

“ LADY Lister has just seen Lady Zitella Herbert alight from her carriage at this inn. She is desirous of the gratification of a personal interview; and therefore requests permission to be admitted to her presence.”

Our orphan gave an acquiescent reply, although much puzzled to discover the cause which could have prompted the wish thus expressed, from one to whom she imagined herself a perfect stranger.

Five minutes had scarcely elapsed, when the door of her apartment was once more opened, and Flora Edgeworth sprang forward, while, with her usual childish, but fond manner, she threw her arms round the neck of our heroine, exclaiming, "My dear, dear Lady Zitella, I knew I should surprise you, for you could never guess who was coming to see you; but——"

She paused abruptly, and drew back, as if the mourning attire which met her eyes had first recalled to her memory the recent family affliction—"Indeed, I had quite forgotten—I am very sorry, although I looked glad to see you—indeed, I was quite distressed to hear of your uncle's sudden death; and if I had recollected it before, I would not have been thus thoughtless and laughing; but, in truth, I am so happy,

so

so very happy, that I cannot refrain from smiling, the livelong day, ever since I gained my liberty. Therefore, my kind Zitella, do not imagine me unfeeling, for I grieved most sincerely when I first learned of your misfortune, because I well knew it would render you unhappy."

Her young companion could not refrain from smiling through the tears which had filled her eyes, on the revived subject of her uncle's melancholy decease, as she listened to the artless lamentation and natural commiseration of the childish Flora.

"I thank you, my sweet girl, for this affectionate proof of your regard; but I am sincerely rejoiced to find, that your happiness is now so supreme, as to excite ceaseless smiles of delight."

"Yes, it is quite perfect, for I can never be taken back any more to that gloomy old house on Salisbury Plain; and I am resolved to try and persuade my father to come and live with me, for Horace says I shall do just what I like; and he has given

me such fine trinkets, and such beautiful pearls! He is so good tempered, he never looks gloomy and miserable, as my father did, when I laugh, nor he never checks my spirits, but he is as gay and as cheerful as I am. And then my dear mother, he says I shall always see her and visit her, as often as I wish. And therefore now I have nothing more to wish for, for I am sure I shall be quite as happy as long as I live."

It may reasonably be supposed that the feelings of Zitella must have been in sweet unison with the happy tone of those of Flora; but happiness, like a new-caged bird, fluttered fearfully in her bosom. Her spirits were agitated by the unexpected declaration, that reciprocal affection existed between herself and the object of her election. She viewed not the matrimonial contract in the light of the volatile Flora; it was to her a solemn, an awful engagement; and, even at the moment when she might have conceived herself authorized to direct her own destiny, by electing the individual

individual both her heart and reason approved as the future partner of her life, yet the timid delicacy of her nature raised a thousand doubts and fears, as to the propriety of her conduct.

Flora witnessed the emotion that she vainly sought to repress; but, placing it solely to the source of the recent family loss, attempted to offer consolation in a naturally kind, but certainly not very effective manner.

An inquiry was now tendered as to whether Lady Edgeworth was also at the inn?

The reply was in the negative, coupled with the information, that Flora was on her road to rejoin the Viscountess in London, whither she expected her to be arrived before that period; but no intelligence had yet been obtained of Lord Edgeworth—"Although," added Lady Lister, "I have no doubt we soon shall, for he will not search the world much longer in a vain hunt after us, since now there is no necessity for further concealment, for

Horace says no one has any right to take me away from him now; and therefore, when my father comes to see me, I will never permit him to return to that dismal Plain, but persuade him to remain, and see how happy I am, and that will render him happy also; and then we should be all happy together."

The return of the Dean interrupted the voluble Flora, and the carriage being pronounced ready, the friends separated.

Leaving Lady Zitella Herbert to pursue her journey into Dorsetshire, we will now take a cursory retrospect of the suddenly formed engagement of Sir Horace Lister.

CHAP. IV.

SIR Horace Lister had, in the narrative of the Mendicant Soldier of Salisbury Plain, acknowledged a clue to the route of the individual in question. The clue, however, was, with difficulty, unravelled by its possessor, although, as a professed hero of romance, the young Baronet was anxious to afford a striking *denouement* to this incident, for the gratification of detailing it in a small volume, entitled, "The Diary of a Romantic Tourist," which was nearly ready for the press, and promised to become an addition to the fashionable literature of a modern toilette.

In

In one of

“ Devon’s myrtle vales,
That drink clear rivers near the glassy sea,”

a retired cottage, hired for the purpose, received the wife and daughter of Lord Edgeworth. Here, concealed beneath a fictitious, untitled name, the Viscountess enjoyed the society of her beloved child, although ceaseless apprehension of the discovery of their present residence being made, embittered these moments of transitory gratification. Weeks rolled on; and so politic had been the arrangements made, in which Mrs. Anson had taken an active and zealous part, that Lord Edgeworth was yet in ignorance whither their flight had been directed.

Even Sir Horace had at length discovered his having been misled, in the direction he imagined to have been embraced by the young soldier, and the lovely female he believed concealed beneath that disguise had effectually eluded his pursuit. He had
consequently

consequently given over the fruitless chace, and was returning to London, attended only by disappointed expectation, when he stopped, one morning, at the village of Southernhay. A severe head-ach rendering him incompetent to endure the burning rays of the powerful orb of day, in a prosecution of his pedestrian route, and much struck with the picturesque scenery which surrounded the neatly-thatched cottages, Sir Horace determined to remain there the whole of that day; and having partaken of homely fare at the rural inn, whose larder boasted scarcely the necessities, rather than the luxuries of a moderate board, he sallied forth, in the hope of enlarging his Diary with some additional adventure; for incident, he was aware, proves far more interesting, to modern readers, than sage dissertations upon antiquities, or, in every respect, than moveable pictures of scenery, whose picturesque resemblance of tufted trees, that grow in each different county, take root in a paper soil,

soil, and supply a superabundant quantity of leaves to every traveller in his volume of rural description, or even those moss-clad rocks watered by the liquid of ink, as well as the purer streams of nature.

But this being the opinion of Lister, it may be also suggested, that he might have spared himself unnecessary labour, by inventing little incidents of children beautifully ragged, weeping over a parent's new raised grave; of Sylvian maniacs haunting the church-yard porch, in search of murdered Strephons; of a stray donkey, a wedding jubilee, or a flight of sparrows; and, indeed, what would be still more interesting to his brother-fashionists, relate the fierce combat of a bull-baiting, a boxing match, a cock fight, or a horse-race, beat hollow by the death of the worn spent animal—sports of renown and distinction in the annals of this refined and enlightened era.

But we must, in justice to the apparent idle search of our present hero, affirm, that
he

he possessed no inventive powers, nor sufficient talent, to cast a foreign plagiarism in a domestic mould, and bring forth the similitude of a new monster from the same clay. Therefore was he compelled to relate literal facts in his Diary of romance, which was certainly one recommendation in its favour.

Fraught with expectation, and busy importance in his own active research through the scenes of nature, Sir Horace rambled across the fields, until he reached the borders of the Glen of Southernhay.

As he stood for a few minutes to contemplate the view around, he saw the figure of a female approaching the spot where he was fixed, with the light elastic step of youth. The declivity down which she was gaily running, rather than walking, was at once steep and slippery. Her careless step was ill calculated to encounter its danger, and she fell, as Horace, seeing her danger, had sprung forward to her assistance, but too late to prevent the accident, which

Lister

Lister certainly regretted, and for a double reason :—first, he lamented the pain it occasioned to a very lovely girl ; and, secondly, it destroyed the perfect romance of the Arcadian adventure, in diverging from its established laws, which require every hero to arrive in that critical auspicious moment to preserve even the life of a heroine. Now, our Baronet did not even save her from the direful misfortune of a sprained ankle, which appeared the most serious injury sustained by the bright form before him. The fair Flora of the glen was, however, faint, as much from sudden alarm as acute pain ; and Lister flew to plunge his hat into the refreshing stream, which happily ran near the spot, and then sprinkled the interesting face of the woodland nymph with the soft produce of the limpid brook, as he reclined her head on his shoulder, and supported her drooping form.

The invalid had just reopened her azure eyes, and was on the point of expressing
her

her acknowledgments for the attention of the unknown, when a second female interrupted the *tête-à-tête*; but, so wholly absorbed in apprehension for her daughter, whose recent accident she had descried from an eminence at some little distance, that she heeded not her companion, until her own name, pronounced by the stranger, arrested attention.

“Heavens! do you know my mother?” said Flora, with quickness—“If so, pray do not betray us.”

“To whom—in what way could I *betray* you?” returned the astonished Lister.

“Cease, Flora; your folly has undone me,” interrupted the elder, “and now compelled me to place reliance on a comparative stranger.—Your character, Sir Horace, is that of a man of honour. It were perhaps now no secret to inform you, that you are addressed by the mendicant wanderer of Salisbury Plain acquaintance; for I already see that I am recognized. Suspend curiosity for the present: hereafter you may

may know ; but your secrecy, under existing circumstances, I myself entreat, or fatal may be the event.—But my darling Flora is yet in pain. We are at present inhabitants of yon cottage : assist me to convey her there, that some remedy may mitigate the effects of so severe a sprain.”

The wondering Baronet assured her of his ready acquiescence. He supported the yet limping Flora to her new abode, and accepted, with alacrity, an invitation within its doors, as he was not so wholly enveloped in his adventure, to be unmindful of the probable consequence of placing a dripping wet hat on his head.

The little rustic was enchanted with her rencontre, and more particularly as it had given a companion to their solitude, and, in the course of the few succeeding days, an attentive and ardent admirer to herself, for the purposed return to the metropolis had been promptly abandoned since this incident of the hill.

He had now become a daily visitor ; and
when

when the shades of evening warned him to depart, or the hint, not to be evaded, passed the lips of the arbitress of his fate, as he now styled the Viscountess, he withdrew, but to dwell, in idea, on the simple charms of his blooming Flora.

These visits were rather encouraged than repressed by Lady Edgeworth, who perceived the impression his heart had received. She was convinced that the mystery which enveloped their seclusion diffused an air of romance around her daughter, calculated to take effect on the mind of this young man.

He was the descendant, and present representative, of a most respectable and ancient family. He possessed a large unincumbered property. His inclinations never prompted him to indulge in any of the profligate vices of the day; his disposition was open and ingenuous, but his understanding was far from brilliant: yet even the doating mother could not be blinded to the conviction, that the intellect
of

of Flora was not qualified to discover the deficiency in his.

Apprehensive each moment of having this darling treasure forcibly wrested from her arms, Lady Edgeworth was aware that in the marriage of her daughter existed the only possibility of securing her society, even for an hour. Irritated against the Viscount, by the last fatal interview at Heath-House, she enjoyed the triumph of being able to decide the fate of her child, in securing to her another protector—one whose power even he could not supercede.

The heart of Lister had, indeed, yielded to the blooming charms of the volatile Flora; enchanted with that *naïve* manner which was winningly attractive to the enthusiast of nature, he for the first time acknowledged the vivid passion of love.

A declaration ensued: he was independent, and at liberty to form his own election; nor was he of a disposition to pause in consideration, ere he took the decisive step.

Flora

Flora was the very heroine to give *eclat* to the vision of romance. The mysterious separation of her parents; the strong affection she bore her mother, which had burst the barriers of confinement, and braved paternal anger, to gain the maternal arms; the singularity of their concealment; the little adventure which had introduced her to his knowledge; the unaffected pleasure she evinced in his society; the smiles which illumined her countenance at each visit he paid to the cottage—all conspired to decide the election of the young tourist. It was a picture he delighted to retrace, and dwelt with ecstasy on the *finale* which it would ere long afford.

The approbation of Lady Edgeworth sealed the engagement; but it was granted only on one condition—that the marriage must be celebrated secretly; for she was apprehensive that a premature discovery, on the part of the Viscount, would annul its execution; or that, if his consent were attained, it would be with a preliminary
fatal

fatal to her hopes—that from the husband of her child a solemn promise would be extorted, to bar all future association with herself. She therefore now proposed to travel northward with Miss Edgeworth, and for Sir Horace to join them at Berwick, when the destined bride was to cross the Tweed with her affianced husband and herself, and in Scotland receive the name of Lister, in the holy bands of wedlock.

Success crowned the plan laid down ; and the period of concealment being, of course, concluded, Lady Edgeworth returned to the metropolis of England, whither she had been summoned, by an express from Mrs. Anson. This lady had, for several weeks, suffered under the malady of a severe fever. The attendant physicians had at length pronounced the case hopeless ; and she was desirous to see her long regarded friend, ere she breathed her last.

The new-made couple repaired to their country-mansion, in Hampshire ; where having passed some days, they proceeded
to

to rejoin the Viscountess in town: and it was in this journey that the rencontre at the inn with Lady Zitella Herbert had occurred.

CHAP. V.

With soften'd voice she dropt the faint refusal,
Smiling consent she sat, and blushing love.

JOHNSON'S IRÈNE.

THE friends having separated, Lady Zitella Herbert and her protector continued their route. Heavy gloom sat upon the brow of the latter, while a fearful joy played on the features of the former. Each carefully avoided a renewal of the subject, which decidedly occupied the thoughts of both.

The next day brought them to Sudley-Hall, where they were received with expressions of genuine delight by the happy group which formed the domestic circle.

The

The good Mrs. Mulgrave talked of renovated youth, and dwelt, with peculiar pleasure, on the anticipated meeting; but when that period had arrived, the penetration of the old lady, and the eloquent blushes of the young one, most certainly betrayed the suspected secret, and Mrs. Mulgrave was in ample possession of all she required. The *denouement* was now viewed in perspective; but she was fully aware of the delicacy required; while she felt, at the same moment, the conviction, that the sense of inferiority in worldly claims would distance the one, while the dread of betraying the real interest felt would throw a veil of repellant reserve over the manners of the other: and thus might two amiable and deserving young people be for ever separated, without the kindly hand of mutual friendship was extended to unite them.

Thus at least reasoned the good old lady of former days, unused to the manœuvring of modern beaux and belles! But soon was

anticipation realized : Molesworth arrived, and observation convinced Mrs. Mulgrave that her conclusions were at least correct, in the instance to which they were applied. She therefore seriously determined upon the plan she decided to pursue, in order to produce the desired *eclaircissement*.

Molesworth announced his intention of returning to India to his aged friend ; and was not a little surprised at the vivacity with which she avowed her belief that she had the ability to detain him in England. He at first entered into what he deemed her *badinage* ; but concluded by seriously assuring her, his reasons for this resolve were too powerful to be obviated.

Mrs. Mulgrave now, in her turn, became serious, and strongly recommended “ *the heiress* ” to his pursuit.

His faltering voice, varying countenance, and agitated manner, were sufficient evidence. She abridged his distress, and encouraged his hopes to address her young favourite, enforcing her advice with all the
eloquence

eloquence she could command; and although a very old woman, Mrs. Mulgrave, on this occasion, was certainly eloquent: and so thought Molesworth. His India scheme began to fade. His unexpected arrival, the day preceding that which was appointed for it, had, at the moment of his entering the drawing-room, alternately painted the lily and the rose upon the soft cheek of Zitella. He would have wished to have grasped Hope; but, unsupported by the voice of another, she would have sunk from his view: again, however, raised to the surface, she obtruded herself, almost to the exclusion of all else.

The Dean of L——, at this important crisis, entered, to bid them adieu, previous to his return to town.

Molesworth seized his hand, and implored him to afford him his candid opinion upon a matter of the utmost importance.

Ancaster was aware of the question, and at once decided upon it. Need we detail the rest?—Assuredly our readers will for-

give the tedium of a love-scene, where they can be only spectators. Let each fair one imagine herself our Zitella; let each of the other sex, who feels himself deserving of such a prize in the important lottery of life, place himself in the situation of our hero; and they will, with more accuracy, draw a mental sketch of the scene which ensued, than I can ever hope to describe.

The heiress, borne away by the potent influence of love, at this auspicious moment, blessed by the smiling divinity of youth's tenderest homage, flattered herself that all her *miseries* might take the past tense; and the elated Molesworth anticipated perfect bliss on earth.

As Lord Edgeworth, however, was not yet returned to Heath-House, and no certain direction could be obtained to him, his consent was yet wanting to the ratification of their mutual bond of love.

Two days after this eventful crisis of the fate of our heroine, as she had retired to
her

her apartment for the night, she was surprised by the entrance of Mrs. Mulgrave, bearing in her hand a letter.

She accepted a seat near the fire, which Zitella placed for her, and then thus began :—

“ I have, for the last three days, my dear young friend, been much distressed at having mislaid this letter, and, after incessant search over my numerous papers, have only a few hours since brought it to hand; yet even this delay has grieved me, as the moment was arrived in which I should have discharged a sacred trust.—Our lamented Lady Darnford, some few months preceding her death, inclosed me this letter. It was accompanied by an explanatory one to myself, requesting, that if life was spared to me, I would fulfil her request; and if not, by deputation I should bear it to you, at the epoch of your life which this moment presents.—Be not alarmed, for there is no cause, not even for emotion, beyond what this renewed proof of her tender affection

for you revives, since you will discover I am well acquainted with its contents; they are, that when your election of a future protector in life is made, that you will, from the period at which her injunction will reach you, delay the ceremony for six months, and conceal from him, the object of your affection, the motive for so doing. The first is obviously to afford you a certain time for observation of character, which impetuosity, on one side, and confiding affection, on the other, might otherwise draw into too narrow limits; and the silence as to the cause for postponement will, by leaving him in ignorance of the vigilant eye which will now be directed towards him, render him less cautious, and more open to candid investigation."

So saying, Mrs. Mulgrave placed the letter upon the toilette, and, pressing the hand of Zitella, added:—

"Our dear friend knew not that I should ever be enabled to deliver her sentiments in person, and has therefore committed them

them to paper. From another world, my sweet girl, this guardian angel now addresses you. Your welfare lay near her heart:—may her prudential counsels realize her hopes!”

Tenderly kissing the cheek of the orphan, the good old lady passed a fervent benediction on the daughter of her deceased friend, and retired from the room.

Zitella did not wet the letter with her tears, neither did her hand tremble as she opened it. A mellowed melancholy seemed to have stolen over her senses, and she felt peculiar gratification in her determination of acting, in this important epoch of her life, under the express direction of a parent, to whose counsel and advice she had, from earliest infancy, paid affectionate and devoted deference. This solemn admonition seemed as a shield extended from Heaven, to protect the inexperienced heiress.

The young mourner retraced the last fatal illness of her mother, with a sorrow deep and lasting; but the dreadful ter-

mination of the life of her erring uncle had created a horror, mingled with the emotion of natural affection. He was to her an object far less dear than her valued parent; yet did the remembrance of his dissolution agitate her nerves, while that of the former produced only the tenderness of mellowed grief.

The contents of the letter proved similar to the impression of Mrs. Mulgrave, but somewhat more diffuse.

Zitella was enjoined to form no positive fixed engagement, until the termination of six months subsequent to the marriage-offer. It was to be wholly conditional, to be dissolved by either party, if circumstances should occur to render it desirable; and that even no ratification should be sought, within this time, for the consent of the guardians of the heiress, lest they should tend to bias her judgment, or prejudicate her election in any degree.

Although Zitella did not hesitate in her determination to acquiesce in the wishes

of the Countess, yet the adoption was peculiarly painful, for she was aware of the unhappy traits of jealousy in the character of her affianced husband; and there was now certainly a probability of affording grounds for apprehension, without the ability, on her part, to elucidate the cause.

Another matter also weighed heavy on her mind:—The very day that the Dean of L——— had left Sudley, while he was congratulating her, in a *tête-à-tête* conversation, at the last hour of his stay, and she had candidly admitted the possible issue of Molesworth's declaration, she hinted to him the extraordinary silence which had been observed respecting his connexions, of which she was yet in total ignorance. The Dean, with faltering voice, assured her, that although his birth was both honourable and respectable, any inquiry thereon would never be productive of satisfactory result; but would, upon the contrary, severely afflict all those to whom alone she could apply. He concluded by earnestly recom-

mending her to rest upon *his* assurance, and her own conviction of his personal merits, rather than to seek, by inquiry, what could never be obtained.

She had once felt inclined to believe him a natural son of the Dean ; but the circumstance of his professed wish to unite him to his daughter had at once effaced this impression, and left her wholly at a loss to trace its source.

Weary with conjecture, she fell to sleep ; but restless and uncomfortable, the night wore away, and by the early dawn she arose, and again resumed the thread of reflection ; from which she was at length withdrawn by the summons to breakfast. But her eyes exhibited not their usual animation, and the faded colour of her cheeks, the effect of her nocturnal disquietude, alarmed the devoted Molesworth. She faintly smiled at the ardent manner in which he expressed his fears ; and although she assured him, with truth, she was well, yet the depression of spirits she readily allowed :

allowed: still she assigned no reason why they were so; and as those of her lover appeared to have been regulated by the same barometer, not even an effort was made to give them a different appearance.

As soon as the breakfast equipage was removed, Clarence proposed a walk in the garden. She gave an assent, with one of her usual smiles, which then appeared for the first time that day; but as their engagement had not been overheard by the party, she withdrew to her dressing-room, to prepare for the promenade, while he seated himself upon an ottoman, to wait her return.

Gloomy were the reflections of the late so happy Molesworth, for he had also a twofold cause of sorrow. Recently his mind had been so absorbed in the transporting conviction of reciprocal affection in his admired Zitella, that it had left no leisure to dwell on the less pleasing side
of

of the picture; but doubt having given place to a joyful certainty, he now adverted to the natural inquiries which Lord Edgeworth, as her guardian, would make, not only with regard to his pretensions to *the heiress*, as far as respected fortune, for there he had, from the first moment, candidly informed her of his deficiency, but as to his family and connexions.

Alas! alas! poor Clarence Molesworth! what was to be the result of such inquiry? And even if this dreaded guardian accorded his acquiescence, could he hope that the proud representative, the only remaining prop. of the houses of Darnford and Nugent, would unite her fate and blend her fortune with doubtful origin?

Again the uncommon gravity of his beloved Zitella at the breakfast-table occurred to his memory, and he paced the room with disordered step. The door unclosed, and the lovely object of his meditation entered.

He

He extended his hand, and received her's, which placing under his arm, they proceeded to the garden.

The yet retained hand was fervently pressed to his lips, as he falteringly said, "Should ought arise, my adored Zitella, to wrest this treasure from me, how much more poignant would be my sufferings, than if hope had not extended her support to my aspiring views!"

"And wherefore should you doubt, Molesworth?" in accents of surprise, she returned — "Caprice is not among my foibles, if I know myself; and unless," she added, with a smile, "you intend to desert, and compel me to wear the willow, I know not, in the common course of events, anything likely to arise in confirmation of your fears."

"Dear, candid girl! how greatly do you merit my whole confidence! and yet I tremble to afford it!"

"Molesworth, you alarm me. To what can you allude? In pity, do not trifle with my feelings. This agitation distresses me
more

more than I can express. Give utterance to your thoughts, and do not suffer me to range in all the horror of conjecture."

"Oh Zitella, dare I expect that not only your guardian, but yourself, would, upon mature reflection, ratify, by the bonds of marriage, an alliance with a beggar, of doubtful birth?"

He paused. The face of his fair auditor became pallid; her lips moved, but no sound was heard.

"You are ill, Zitella!"

"No, not ill; only greatly shocked—surprised, I mean—not quite prepared—"

Molesworth dropped the hand he held. —"It were needless to soften the term: "you are '*shocked*,' for your whole appearance indicates it; nor can I wonder at the effect. I meant to have been more cautious; but my feelings superseded my prudence. If the declaration I have now made has been too long delayed, forgive me; but my fortitude shrank from the trial. I would not bow my daring spirit to the
degrading

degrading confession, that an unknown outcast, a dependant on the bounty of the Dean of L——, had presumed to sue for the hand of Lady Zitella Herbert, the wealthy *heiress*."

"Cease, Molesworth, these distressing reflections, for they are not merited. All the miseries that the wealthy *heiress* has known have, in fact, arisen from that source. Your want of fortune never weighed with me. I acknowledge, I am not sufficiently romantic to think of a cottage and cameleon fare; but where abundance fills the coffers on one side, it were unnecessary to seek for a counterbalance on the other: and such calculations have, therefore, never been arranged in arithmetical order in my imagination. Explain to me, with your accustomed candour, the dark allusion respecting your family connexions."

"I have none to offer, Zitella. The Dean of L—— assures me I am legitimate, yet am nameless; that I am not of ignoble

ignoble birth, yet not acknowledged ; that my parents are wealthy, yet I am poor. Whenever I have attempted interrogating him, he has always discovered the strongest emotion, has wrung my hand, confessed he has *injured me*, implored my forgiveness, and even wept upon my shoulder. When he supposed me attached to his daughter, he would have given her to me, poor and dependant as I am. Still has he invariably assured me no earthly power should wring the secrets attached to me from his lips ; that a solemn oath binds him to silence ; and that in silence he will not only live, but die.—Thus, Lady Zitella,” he continued, with a deep and heavy sigh, “ thus am I bereft of all hope for the future. Elated by the unexpected declaration of reciprocal affection, these impassable barriers faded from my view ; but reason once more illumines the horizon, and I view with dismay the black clouds which envelop me ; palsied hope in vain seeks to
dispel

dispel them ; they gather still more closely around, and ere long I shall sink into the arms of despair."

The tears, which no effort could now suppress, streamed down the cheeks of our orphan : with interrupted sobs she addressed him thus, as she presented her hand :—" Dear Clarence, accept *this* assurance ; banish these melancholy unfounded forebodings : all will yet be well—rest assured it will. Rest securely upon my affection, and be regarded for *yourself alone*."

In transport he kissed the snowy hand he held—it was alternately pressed to his lips, to his heart ; his face flushed with the crimson tide of joy, his features beamed with animation and happiness—" Beloved Zitella, abridge then the painful period of hope deferred ; name the auspicious day, when on the altar these flattering professions may be ratified by the rites of our religion."

But what was the astonishment of Molesworth

worth to see the colour fade from the before vermillion lips of our heroine, and, withdrawing her hand from his grasp, she again burst into tears.

The cause of this emotion, though unintelligible to Molesworth, will be less so to our readers, for they will perceive its source in the posthumous letter of the Countess.

Zitella was prohibited from revealing its contents. Six months of probation was required: and at this juncture to enforce it, was cruelly to have raised the object of her love to the pinnacle of happiness, only to hurl him from its summit; for, with the pressure of other circumstance, she had entirely lost sight of her resolution, which two hours since existed, of exacting from her lover the time enjoined by a deceased parent, ere she resigned her future happiness to the care of him to whom she meant to delegate the sacred trust; and now that the unexpected avowal of his extraordinary situation, with respect to

Dr.

Dr. Ancaster, would only confirm his impression, that she considered him as unworthy of the alliance he had sought, she knew him proudly tenacious in this point, and she dreaded the effect of natural conclusions.

In vain did the agitated Molesworth implore an explanation: his trembling auditor was unable to afford it.

“Zitella, you deceive yourself.—I will explain your feelings; and be assured my interpretation is correct. This struggle is between your own sense of superiority, and a generous compassion for the misery which you feel awaits me. I submit, uncomplainingly, to the decision of your judgment, and avow myself highly culpable, in having thus long withheld my actual situation from your knowledge.”

“No, Molesworth; you wrong me. I reject your conclusions, for my heart disavows them. I am only anxious for your reception of a request I have to offer——”

“Name it,” he eagerly replied.

“It

“It is, that you will efface from your memory the hasty offer I have so lately made you, and that for six months we may only appear as friends; that, during this term, each party shall be considered at full liberty; and at the expiration of it, that either may decline the present proposal of union, or ratify it, as circumstance may determine; and, lastly, that you will permit me to conceal the motives which have influenced this engagement.”

“To conceal the motives is impossible, for they are palpable!” returned the former, rising from his seat—“The six months is mercifully meant to reconcile me to the decrees of fate. The claims of family, the opinion of the world, are not to be waved; they press heavily upon your mind, Lady Zitella; and it is natural, perhaps proper, that they should do so. I am aware they have a right to be heard, dispassionately weighed; and when they are so, the result is obvious. I thank you for the tenderness you have evinced for my feelings; but six months,

months, or six years, will produce no such effect as you anticipate, since mine has not been the light preference of the moment; for even while the lover passionately adores, he has stept beyond the present, and dared to regard the future—he has viewed, in perspective, that period when youth and beauty may have lost their attractions, but when the influence of superior powers will outweigh them—he has even anticipated the hour when he should evidence how much dearer is the wife than was the lovely fascinating mistress; when the beloved partner of his life, the perhaps fond mother of his children, may claim from him, and receive, the purest attachment of which the human heart is susceptible! But the chimera dissolves; reason supersedes her influence. I would not distress you; but suffer this interview to be our last. It were an useless experiment: six months hence it would, to me, be equally painful; and the interim would afford no solace to yourself.”

As

As he concluded, he rested on a table, and leaning his face upon his hands, covered it from observation.

“Surely,” exclaimed Zitella, “no situation was ever more distressing than mine. If you really value my affections, Molesworth, rely upon my assertions. I am not governed by the ignoble, unworthy motives you have ascribed to me. Rest with confident security on my truth, and acquiesce in my request. Tell me that you will do so, that you will remain here, and that you will, without further distressing either your feelings or my own, wait with patience the prescribed period—tell me, my friend, will you do this?”

“*Friend!*” he murmuringly ejaculated—“can I banish these ‘*unworthy, ignoble*’ surmises, when even the address is already changed?”

“Molesworth,” she coldly replied, “these ungenerous suspicions are unmerited. I shall begin to think no hope of future happiness can be rested, where solemn assurances

surances are regarded but as paltry excuses, and where unfounded doubt supersedes confidence!"

" Pardon me, Zitella; I have been wrong, and let the candour of your mind make allowance for the acuteness of my disappointment: but where the heart is so deeply interested, minor considerations naturally give way. I submit to your conditions. Hard and cruel as they are, I will endeavour to believe them right."

Approaching footsteps interrupted their *tête-à-tête*, neither being sufficiently collected to meet a third: they therefore abruptly separated, to seek their different apartments.

CHAP. VI.

My native scenes! can aught in time or space
 From this fond heart your lov'd remembrance chase?
 Link'd to that heart by ties for ever dear,
 By joy's bright smile, and sorrow's tender tear,
 By all that e'er my anxious hopes employ'd;
 By all my soul has suffer'd or enjoy'd!
 Still blended with these well-known scenes, arise
 The varying images the past supplies.

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

The Summer Cloud.

SOME days after this eventful conversation,
 as our hero and heroine were enjoying a
 walk over the beautiful plantation of the
 Nugent estate, a summer cloud suddenly
 arose,

arose, and the anxious lover insisted upon Zitella taking shelter, until the shower should have passed over.

Our orphan, although unapprehensive herself of taking cold, acquiesced in his importunity; and, perceiving themselves near the farm she had allotted to the happy village-pair, of former acquaintance, consented to enter their dwelling.

Here she was received with every demonstration of grateful delight by the deserving Lucy, who bewailed most sensibly that her husband should be absent, and not have the opportunity of seeing and thanking their kind benefactress; but, for the last fortnight, he had been in a neighbouring county, transacting some business for his father.

Having for some time discussed, with much interest, their concerns, and made inquiry as to their proceedings in the agricultural line, Zitella added, "You seem as happy as ever, Lucy."

"Happy! yes, my Lady; I should be

very thankless, and very wicked, if I was not, for Heaven has blessed us ever since we have been married; and our farm, as I said before, goes on very prosperously; and William is so industrious and so soberly inclined, that we have had this year nearly twice as large a crop as any of our neighbours: but I don't mind that, in place of his kindness to me, and his true love, for I would be poor as he was when we first courted, rather than lose his affection and good-will; and I hope, my honoured Lady, you will be as happy as I when you are married to that there great gentleman that I heard of—Lord Arthur, that has got such a fine estate, about four miles off; for I was sorry to hear you were gone to London, for fear you should have got a husband there, that you knew nothing about; and then, you know, he might have come out to be a shark, as brother Tom, who is a boatswain, used to call them; for he said London is made up of pickpockets, and that there sort of cattle; and as you, my
Lady,

Lady, had a world of money, as Mrs. Irwin told me, why, you might have fallen into bad hands, for the sake of it: but now that you are going to have this grand gentleman, with as much, and more money than he can want, why, he need not to think about your's, my Lady; and so now he must, for a certainty, be sincere and true-hearted, and that is a great deal, I have heard say, in such a wicked city as London; for mother often told me, that when she was waiting-woman, in her young years, to a fine widow lady, in that town, why, the servants thought nothing of talking about the fortune-hunters, as they called them, that used to come after her; and sure enough the kind soul believed one of the wicked gentry, and she had not been married again a twelvemonth, before she was in her grave; and I dare to say she broke her heart, for it is a shocking thing to have a bad husband. But as you now, my Lady, are going to have a rich gentleman, who does not care about your money, because he has got

enough himself, why, it is all nonsense for me to talk about the bad that might be."

Zitella sighed; the smiling dimples of the preceding moment were lost in the melancholy cloud which overspread her features; for again the doubts of *the heiress* were revived by the artless expressions of Lucy.

Clarence started; his heart, too accessible to the demon jealousy, admitted this fatal foe within its enclosure—he traced the source of that sigh, of that pensive melancholy, to the remembrance of Craven.

The tears he had once believed shed for him, at the party of Lady Dorville, now recurred to his imagination. The open avowal of Mrs. Nugent, in regard to her preference, the confusion and embarrassment which that declaration had excited in Zitella, were aliment to support the existence of the hydra-headed monster.—“Gracious God!” he mentally exclaimed, “have I then been accepted, perhaps, in the moment of pique? Resentment for
the

the inconstancy of him she really loves may alone have influenced the election of myself;" and, with perturbed step, he walked towards a window, but not until his sudden emotion had been observed by Zitella. She, however, imputed it to another cause: she conceived him distressed by the apparent inference which might be drawn from a dependant on Fortune's smiles, who had sought the wealthy "*heiress*;" and, without taking sufficient interest in the report respecting Lord Arthur, to heed the necessity of a contradiction, she abruptly rose, and, remarking the shower was over, proposed returning home.

Lucy curtsied and curtsied, until her curtsies could be no longer seen; and in silence the lovers walked on. It was at length broken by Zitella.—"Happiness seems to dwell more perfect beneath that roof, than I have ever yet witnessed in any sphere."

"Lucy appears to date it from *equality*," said Clarence, fixing his eyes on the coun-

tenance of our heroine.—“ When she married you to ‘ *the great Lord*,’ she appeared to conceive that reciprocal rank and fortune would insure your future felicity.”

“ She knows me little then,” returned the orphan, smiling: “ the rank and fortune of ‘ *the great Lord*’ would, with me, have been powerless attractions.”

She sighed involuntarily as she concluded, for she feared the attraction of her own.

Molesworth regarded the speech with jaundiced impression; indeed, he feared it was the *individual* who had interested; while the accompanying sigh confirmed the painful apprehension.

The emotion which was obvious in the countenance of Clarence, was not unnoticed by his companion. She dreaded lest he perceived the latent suspicion which yet lingered in her bosom, apprehensive that his feelings might be wounded by the perhaps ungenerous doubt. She therefore abruptly turned the conversation into another channel.

This

This was rather corroboration to the surmise of Molesworth. He imagined she was unequal to continuing a subject of so much interest, as he conceived that of Lord Arthur Craven appeared. Thus was the jealousy of his impetuous nature aroused to a painful extent.

The sun darting his rays with sudden force from beneath the cloud, which had temporarily veiled his power, now reminded our orphan that she had left her parasol at the farm; and Clarence quitted her, to seek it, while she promised to wait his return.

As she stood leaning on a stile by the road, she descried, from the turn of the path, the approach of an equestrian, who rode directly towards her, and springing from his horse at the same moment, she recognized Lord Arthur Craven.

He threw the reins into the hands of his servant, and advancing near, addressed her. —“ May I yet, as a *friend*, venture to approach Lady Zitella Herbert, although ba-

nished from the hope of a 'dearer character?"

"In the list of my friends, I shall ever be most happy to recognise your Lordship," replied Zitella, offering her hand in confirmation.

The declaration was as sincere as the manner of delivery was frank and unaffected. Convinced that the heart of Craven had never been hers, she viewed him not in the light of a discarded or miserable lover of her own, and therefore felt unembarrassed by the recognition; yet so highly did she admire the energetic and exalted mind of this young nobleman, that she conceived an interest in his happiness, an esteem and regard for the individual who possessed such manifold recommendations. Yet his presence at this moment was productive of pain, for it forcibly revived the last time they had met at the house of Lady Ann Leigh, where she had first become awakened to that dangerous infatuation of her uncle, which had preceded the fatal catastrophe which terminated

nated his life. Her eyes filled with tears, her bosom heaved with the sudden revival of recent affliction.

Zitella withdrew not the hand yet retained by Craven; for as he had disclaimed any other title than that of friend, she felt the appearance of retreating from the cordial warmth of his present greeting, would rather imply that she still remembered him as the lover, rather than under the appellation he now claimed.

Lord Arthur was himself agitated. The last evening they had met, was too momentous in its events, to be forgotten by him; it was the memorable era that had again unexpectedly brought Maria to his view, after an absence honour had rigorously dictated, and rectitude had as correctly followed.

As Zitella raised her eyes, at this moment, to reply to his continued address, she was shocked by the alteration visible. He seemed but as the wreck of his former self, and, save for that peculiar illumination of

mind which marked his countenance, that energetic manner which appertained alone to himself, she would scarcely have recognized the Craven of a few preceding weeks.—“Have you been ill, my Lord?” she inquired, at the moment almost unconscious she had given utterance to the mental impression. But the question had reached the ear of Molesworth, as he now stood beside her, while her yet tearful eyes gave an apparent interest to the interrogatory, that his heart sensibly felt.

Lord Arthur did not reply, for he had turned to address him. The greeting was, on his part, most cordial; but Molesworth was unusually cold and embarrassed in return. He did not, as heretofore, draw the arm of Zitella within his own; but as the trio moved on, he continued silently to walk at the side of our orphan.

The only error which, perhaps, appertained to the heart of our hero, was a quick susceptibility of jealous emotion; it was a leading trait in his character, and promised

mised to embitter those days of existence pregnant with the warm juvenility of love.

The conversation rested entirely between our orphan and Lord Arthur, who, although he had renounced the title of a lover, had certainly not resigned that of a warm admirer of Lady Zitella Herbert. Indeed, so much of enthusiasm dwelt in the disposition of Craven, that his admiration was perhaps almost equivalent to the love half mankind are capable of feeling; and those who had never seen him with the woman who really possessed his affections, might have naturally concluded Zitella was that being.

After much previous discourse, the bride of Sir Horace Lister at length became a subject of discussion; and, rallying her spirits, to disperse the cloud which enveloped them, our heroine, with a smile, inquired, "How Miss Clairmond was reconciled to the dereliction of her knight of romance?"

"*That* romance is concluded, and the lady not inconsolable, I assure you," returned

turned Craven ; and he looked significantly at Clarence, who coloured, but tendered no remark.

Lord Arthur continued :—“ A new character is now attempted, and no less arduous than that of *Lucilla* ; when, of course, Lister cannot be the hero of her present undertaking ; but as the fair Euphemia is apprehensive the similitude might pass undiscovered, without a very marked trait of guidance, she has therefore adopted the blossoming mead of that heroine, and crowned herself a goddess, in the floral department : nor is the kind monitor of Time neglected ; it is suspended, to guard her from the indulgence of this amusement—or rather the too strenuous cultivation of this fifth cardinal virtue, according to the distinction it has obtained from the *Lucilla* system. But Miss Clairmond has determined to improve upon the idea ; for in the garden of the cottage *orné* at Hampstead, we behold a figure of Cupid bearing the timist suspended from a chain
of

of roses and myrtle: but whether this be intended to imply the lady's inconstancy, the lady's self-denial, or the lady's folly, seems equally a matter of doubt."

The pedestrians had now arrived on the grounds of Sudley, and Lord Arthur stopt, to take leave.

"Can I not persuade your Lordship to enter?" said Zitella—"I shall be most happy to present you to the friends with whom I am now a resident."

"Another time I shall be sincerely gratified in embracing the kind permission you have extended, and unite at once with the honour of being made known to friends you so highly value, the happiness of being admitted within a mansion in which I can enjoy the society of your Ladyship; for, at present, I am an inhabitant of Killigrew Abbey, whither I am now in haste to return, as I expect, this evening, to greet the arrival of my friend Stavenant."

He delivered the latter part of the
speech

speech with rapidity, and, warmly pressing the hand of our heroine, mounted his horse, which speedily galloped off; but the emotion which this anticipation of seeing the husband of Maria had awakened, was too visible to be unremarked by her, who alone possessed the secret clue to its source; and unconsciously her eyes followed the fleet courser of Craven, with an expression of regret, which arose from friendly sympathy for his unhappy fate, and not the retreat of him she loved, as Molesworth had erroneously imagined.

Really fatigued by her walk, and her spirits depressed by the revived reflection of her recent loss, Zitella complained of trifling indisposition, and, at an early hour, retired to her chamber.

Molesworth soon after withdrew to the lodgings he had hired, in a commodious cottage, near the Hall. The last movement of our orphan had breathed "*confirmation strong as proof of holy writ*" to the jealous temperament of the lover; he
believed

believed himself even in possession of the clue to the solicited delay, for he conceived it originated in a strong attachment to Craven; that, in a moment of jealous resentment alone, she had accepted of him; and that, on more mature reflection, she felt the necessity of time to bend her heart to the performance of an engagement, formed in angered precipitation, and from which her inclination now recoiled.

Maddened with the torturing phantom which his jaundiced imagination had reared, and to whose real existence the fiend jealousy gave current stamp, he raved with all the delirium of passion. At one moment he resolved at once to renounce the beloved object. Had she not deceived him, rendered him the easy tool to wreak her revenge against another? Was she not herself palpably anxious to retreat from the engagement precipitately formed? Surely she had professed herself to that effect; and should honour yet bind her to ratify it, could he accept the unwilling hand of
her,

her, whose heart was in the possession of another? Could he press in his arms, as the partner of his wedded joys, the cold senseless form of her he loved? Could he see her languishing in a captivity, whose chains were heavy and painful on her inclinations, who now perhaps viewed him as the only barrier between herself and happiness with another? Wildly he struck his forehead; the warm feelings of his soul were roused to the most excruciating torture, and held despotic sway over this martyr to jealousy.

At one moment, he exclaimed he could for ever renounce the perfidious, cruel, deceitful Zitella; but the emotion was transitory. The philosophy of theory, with a first and early love, could not be brought into practice; the passionate lover, high in the youthful energies of ardent affection, so lately elevated on the pinnacle of extatic hope, could not thus promptly resign the female of his adoration to the arms of another.

Again he viewed, almost with contempt, the election that he supposed Zitella to have made. He viewed Craven only from casual observation; he had possessed no opportunity of intimately appreciating those estimable and brilliant qualities of heart and head, which really vested in this young nobleman. He believed that our heroine had bowed her affections to merely an attractive exterior; he considered Lord Arthur as vain, presumptive, and arrogant, frivolous, trifling, and capricious—a mere coquet, who would amuse himself, and sport with the attachment of a lovely and admired female, to gratify his own insatiate puerile vanity. The heroism his Lordship had displayed, according to public report, in the bloody warfare of Corunna, he acknowledged; but conceived individual undaunted courage so inseparable an attendant on man, that he would have viewed the being as beneath that distinction, who had failed to display it, when opportunity offered, in a military capacity; yet even
there

there he traced only rash impetuosity, the fire of ambitious vanity to distinguish himself; it was not the steady zeal of a patriot, neither the firm courage of a rational mind. He was madly great, frantically heroic.

The whimsical contradiction of his manner was to him puerile, and unworthy of a being gifted with intellect: Thus, with additional anguish, he felt that the heart of the heiress was sufficiently prone to the weakness of her sex, as to bow before

"The glass of fashion, and the mould of form."

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Rage is the shortest passion of our souls :

Like narrow brooks, that rise with sudden show'rs,

It swells in haste, and falls again as soon ;

Still as it ebbs, the softer thoughts flow in,

And the deceiver Love supplies its place.

Rowe.

The expected Visitor.

At breakfast, the next morning, no Clarence Molesworth made his appearance at Sudley Hall, which was his usual custom, having received a general invitation to that effect.

Our heroine was not so delicately alive to interesting terrors, as to conjure up any
horrific

horrific ideas on the occasion, although she certainly experienced some uneasiness on account of the absence of her lover.

In the course of conversation, she mentioned to the Doctor her encounter with Lord Arthur Craven, and his desire of being made known to the Moreland family. He expressed himself happy to see and be introduced to any friend of his young charge; while his lady and Mrs. Mulgrave joined in suitable avowal.

By chance Zitella mentioned his Lordship's expectation of the arrival of a visitor the preceding evening, speaking of him by name.

Moreland repeated the appellation, and then made some inquiries concerning the family of this gentleman. The replies of his guest confirmed him in the pleasing expectation that he was in reality an old friend of the Doctor, whom, when a boy, he had attended through a long and dangerous illness; nor had the interest evinced by Dr. Moreland, independent of his professional

fessional visits, been lightly regarded by Stavenant.

The breakfast past, each sought their usual morning avocations, save Zitella, who yet lingered in the room, that overlooked the road from the cottage where Molesworth had embraced a temporary residence.

As time advanced, her mind became still more uneasy. She recollected her own indisposition the preceding evening, and was aware his neglect of making early inquiry was contrary to his former conduct; and was therefore convinced some cause of moment must have produced his absence.

She at length quitted the breakfast apartment, and repaired to the drawing-room. It was vacant; and she arranged her drawing utensils with uncommon exactitude; but it was a kind of mechanical precision, which proved a certain *esprit d'égarement* from the action.

She sat down, and began colouring a
Thalia,

Thalia, she had previously sketched ; but so little was attention bestowed on the employment, that she converted the smiling muse into a lachrymal object, touching and retouching the picture, without bestowing one reflection on the performance.

The door at length opened, and Molesworth appeared.

The pencil fell from her hand ; her countenance was illumined, and a spontaneous smile played over her features at his entrance. This natural expression of undisguised pleasure momentarily banished the cloud which had overhung the brow of Clarence, and his salutation was warm, fervent as ever ; but there was an agitation in his manner visible to the vigilant observation of the heiress, and his eyes betrayed the anxiety of the last wakeful night, which had been incessantly spent in pacing to and fro his apartment, without attempting to seek the influence of sleep.

“ You appear ill, Molesworth,” said Zitella, with interest.

Clarence

Clarence pressed her hand with emotion, and, as suddenly dropping it, with affected indifference raised one of the drawings, which lay on the table before them, and coldly tendered a remark on the performance.

Alas! the tone in which a similar observation to that recently afforded him had been made the preceding evening to Craven, had again revived in the recollection of Molesworth; nor were the accompanying tears, which had been visible at the moment of the speech, slow in recurrence to the memory of our hero.

The door was now once more thrown open, and the Doctor entered, with this hated rival and Mr. Stavenant, having encountered these gentlemen on the grounds of Sudley, proceeding to the Hall, as the latter was actually his *ci-devant* friend, and was consequently anxious to pay an early visit to the family. Thus did our heroine now, for the first time, behold the husband of Maria.

Mrs. Mulgrave and Mrs. Moreland being made acquainted with the arrival of these guests, soon appeared, and the conversation became general.

“ I was informed of the visit to our neighbourhood of a Mr. Stavenant, by Lady Zitella Herbert ; and curiosity has been busy ever since, to ascertain whether he would prove the individual of my former knowledge. I hope you purpose making some stay in our neighbourhood ? ”

“ No, Doctor ; only a few days, if I can persuade Lord Arthur to be my travelling-companion to Cheltenham, where I have left Mrs. Stavenant ; but he talks of parchments, rent-rolls, law-suits, and a train of engagements, that rivet him to Hill-Grove Abbey. I am, however, a little incredulous, and inclined to think there must be a reason more powerful than these ; and that the accounts of his steward will not be the more critically investigated by his presence here, or his absence elsewhere. I therefore conceive some fair belle to be the origin of
this

this determination to remain in Dorsetshire. I pronounce him labouring under the malady of love, and acting from its secret influence.—What say you, my good friend, Dr. Moreland, on his case? Is it incurable?”

Craven was distressed. There was an application of this speech, which only himself and Zitella knew to render correct. Their eyes by chance met at this moment. She withdrew hers, sensible this apparent observation might seem indelicate, and prove painful, while she blushed for her own inadvertence.

Molesworth rolled and unrolled the drawing, yet in his hand, with a celerity that threatened to prove injurious to the painting.

Craven rose, and, anxious to turn the conversation, leaned over the back of Zitella's chair, to survey the subject of her employment.—“ I never before suspected your Ladyship of indulging in whimsical
G 2 conceits,”

conceits," he commenced; "yet, to convert a Thalia into a Penserosa, is somewhat a flight of fancy, it must be owned."

"A most dismal and deplorable fancy, in very truth," returned our orphan; "but as airy speculators, my Lord, have affirmed that all colour is produced by reflection, let us carry this theoretical doctrine a little farther, and suppose that the sombre or gay may be produced by the vision through which they are viewed: thus, mine having this morning been waywardly pensive, it has, perhaps, produced the metamorphosis."

"That is a shocking symptom, my young friend," added the good physician; "for pensive abstraction is a certain proof of Cupid's most fatal malady."

"Never suffer the little divinity to take up his abode in the cave of melancholy," said Craven, with a forced smile; "for, like the subterraneous dwelling of the Captain of Banditti and his Forty Thieves, he will find the watch-word to gain admission will be impotent to secure an exit."

"A very

"A very sage admonition from one who argues not from experience," replied Stavenant.

"Do not be too secure on that ground," repeated Lord Arthur, with a suppressed sigh; and then, changing his tone, as if apprehensive he had made an erring declaration, he subjoined, "I may yet come forth a knight of the woeful."

"The Octavian of Dorsetshire," said Stavenant, archly.

"And you shall be transformed into *the Stranger*," rejoined Mrs. Moreland, "to enliven the spirits of this most forlorn rambler."

"No," said Stavenant, "not exactly '*the Stranger*' either, for I have no wish to claim the Mrs. Haller as my partner in life."

Craven started, his fine countenance crimsoned, and he bent over the drawings, which lay in a port-folio on the table.

Zitella saw his emotion, and, anxious to relieve it, said, "You have often, my Lord, expressed a desire to behold a peculiarly

fine Madona, by Guido, which I had mentioned as being in this mansion ; and I shall now be happy to shew it to your Lordship."

They both rose ; and Zitella, throwing open the door of an adjoining apartment, pointed the picture to his Lordship's observation, as they advanced within the room, followed by the eyes of Molesworth.

Lord Arthur gazed vacantly on the Madona ; he rested against the frame of a window, near which it hung, and his whole figure was visibly under the influence of uncontrollable agitation.

Our orphan affected not to perceive what was so apparent ; but contrived to alter the arrangement of some flowers that were placed on a stand near, to afford him time to regain self-composure.

" I shall soon, in reality, I believe, become an Octavian," said Craven, in a low but despairing voice—" My reason cannot support these trials of anguish ; my mind is tortured, abstracted, and wild ;
scarcely

scarcely can it now command the effort necessary to sustain me in society."

"Your Lordship, having given utterance to so painful an impression, will pardon my asking, where can exist the necessity of exposing your fortitude to a trial you deem so unequal to its exertion?—circumstance having given me possession of a secret, from the nature of which I should not otherwise have been made a confidante, you will, I trust, excuse the query; but Maria lives not for you—yet more, she is the wife of your friend, your *confiding* friend, my Lord."

"I do not expose myself to the danger," said Craven—"Not for worlds would I now seek Maria; and yet you are little aware of the difficulties which attend my self-banishment from the house of Stavenant. Accustomed, from our boyish years, to be almost inseparable, our secrets, our wishes, our *affections*," he falteringly added, "have been correspondent. He remarks my withdrawing from his society; he accuses me

of a failure in former regard. I have pled urgent business on my Dorset estate; I have been compelled to invite him hither, or appear forgetful and indifferent to a valued friend. He, on his part, insists on my return with him. He is sensibly hurt at my refusal—indeed, it has almost produced a rupture between us. He accuses me of being cold and altered in my behaviour towards him; that even when in London, where we first met after a long absence, that I not only never sought him, but, on the contrary, almost invariably refused his repeated pressing invitations. He is convinced some cause does exist to have produced this effect; and that friendship, warm as mine once was for him, could not have been weakened by any frivolous cause. Alas! he dreams not of the real one; nor is it one that to him I can ever acknowledge. And these are the cruel circumstances in which I stand.”

“ Distance then, my Lord, is surely the best security; for should the fatal discovery

very extend, misery will hereafter attach to the wedded wife of your friend, and the object of your ill-fated attachment. Thereby will your own days be still more embittered by the reflection, that a little prudence on your part might have shielded them from the dreadful participation of woe."

"Yes, I acknowledge the justice of this reasoning; I feel that distance is my only refuge. Oh, Zitella, with you for my guardian angel, I might yet be shielded from this dreaded danger. You alone, of all your sex, have ever for a moment detached my soul from Maria; and you alone can save me from destruction!"

"As your *friend*, Lord Arthur, I trust I shall ever have cause to esteem and respect you, however an unfortunate lapse from rectitude may, for a time, have obscured the real virtues of your heart. As a friend, I repeat, I shall ever feel interested in your welfare; but I will candidly tell you, I can never be more—since your Lordship has,

more than once, hinted a reliance on time and perseverance, I will go yet farther," she added, while the bright vermillion of her cheek received a deeper shade; "the heart you sue for is given to another, and the hand will most probably follow it, although no actual engagement exists. I have been thus explicit, to supersede any expectations you may have formed respecting the future, and I trust this declaration will have all the effect I anticipate."

"The annihilation of hope," he rejoined, "must succeed to the candour of the declaration you have afforded; and however painful may be the conviction you have impressed, yet the confidence of your Ladyship is justly appreciated, while the advice you have condescended to offer is too highly valued, not to be properly attended to. I will even quit England, if Maria continues a resident of this country, for, without a guide, a director, a *guardian angel*, it were presumption to remain."

He bowed upon the hand he had taken.

Lady

Lady Zitella, wishing now to put an end to the conversation, moved towards the room they had quitted; and Lord Arthur followed, with a melancholy and abstracted air.

Upon rejoining the party, our heroine observed Clarence stationed at a window, apparently wholly engaged with some exterior object. As she approached, to make inquiry as to what had so entirely absorbed him, he turned, and, seeing her movement towards him, snatched his hat from a table, and offered his parting *congé*.

“ You will dine with us, Molesworth, at our usual hour?” said Dr. Moreland, “ for Lord Arthur Craven and Mr. Stavenant have just consented to be of our domestic party.”

“ To-day, Sir,” he repeated, “ a particular engagement intervenes, and prevents me the honour of accepting an invitation, which, under other circumstances, would afford me so much pleasure.”

Then, without waiting a rejoinder, he abruptly quitted the room.

“Molesworth does not appear himself,” said Craven, as the door closed; “and I fear I am the cause of his very perceptible agitation: for that, viewing me as the brother of his rival, I have painfully recalled him to his memory.”

“The brother of his rival!” re-echoed Zitella, with undissembled surprise.

“Yes, according to newspaper paragraphs, and general report; although, in reality, I do not imagine there is much substantial ground for this rumour. Yet the former absolutely affirm, that his Grace of Somerton is a captive to the charms of Miss Ancaster, and that the Dean has effectually interfered to prevent those attentions Molesworth certainly very recently tendered the beauteous Marian; for this connexion was, of course, not conceived eligible by the parents of his fair mistress, however the lady might very readily have been inclined to surrender her heart to a suitor so individually prepossessing.”

“And does your Ladyship really suppose,”

pose," resumed Zitella, hesitatingly, "that Mr. Molesworth was attached to Miss An-caster?"

"My own observation would certainly have led to a confirmation of that opinion," he added, "if I could have supposed so superior a mind could have assimilated with the pretty, infantine, and frivolous Marian; for however lovely, and however amiable she may really be, she is certainly not the woman I should have supposed formed, either by nature or education, for the future partner of Clarence Molesworth."

To the great relief of our heroine, dinner was at this moment announced, and Lord Arthur, taking her hand, led her to the room.

The remainder of the day passed heavily. The mind of Zitella hung, with painful interest, on the manner of Molesworth, when he recently quitted her; nor could she rally either spirits or attention.

She pled the necessity of replying to a letter, as an apology for quitting the party
at

at an early hour ; and, as soon as coffee was dismissed, retired to her own apartment. There she had leisure for reflection, and, with grief, perceived that jealousy and distrust had resumed their empire over the mind of her affianced husband. She felt the necessity, if possible, of eradicating these baneful passions, though she could not but acknowledge there had certainly been strong grounds for their existence. With a mind candid and properly directed as hers was, when her excellent understanding, and the virtues of her heart, were consulted, and brought into action, to be sensible of error, was sufficient instantly to seek to repair it ; and she was conscious, that although she was restricted as yet from disclosing the cause which had operated, not only to postpone, but actually to recant a positive engagement, yet to adopt such a measure, under existing circumstance, and assign no motive, could only lead to the conclusion, that caprice, or an unworthy wish to extend the coquetry
of

of the mistress, to a lengthened period, had induced the determination; and that subsequent scenes, which bore at least equivocal appearance, when the admired Craven was, from remote, but secret cause, connected, united to produce alarm to the sensitive mind of the fondly-attached lover.

These reflections subdued the influence of sleep; and long after the family had retired, Zitella was yet in her dressing-room. Determined at length on the course she was to pursue, she sought her bed, with feelings rather more composed, and only longed for the return of day, to quiet the alarm she feared existed in the breast of Clarence, and to render him as tranquil as untoward circumstances would permit.

The joyful summons of the breakfast bell at length met her ear; but no Molesworth appeared. The day wore away; still he was absent. Three o'clock, however, brought the anxiously-expected visitor.

The observant Mrs. Mulgrave saw that some cause had arisen to disturb the serenity

renity of her young friend, and attempted investigation, as she seated herself between them.

Half in jest and half in earnest, she at length brought one at least to confession; for, by interrogatories on one side, and abstraction, with mingled incoherence, on the other, it appeared clear that the poor hero of our tale had wandered the live-long day in solitude; and, in fact, by rejecting the invitation to dinner at Sudley-Hall, to shake off the trammels of restraint, had, from the same cause, been deterred from going home; and as the whole truth crept from the lips of the forlorn lover, he was discovered to have absolutely gone without substantial aliment, and had actually fed on "air-drawn vision."

Zitella now reduced her system to practice, and soon successfully pled her own cause, without betraying the secrets yet in reserve; while Clarence Molesworth acknowledged, that his fears and apprehensions were perpetually on the alarm, from
the

the conviction of his own unhappy situation, and the idea of that reproach which the world, he was aware, would attach to her, in rejecting, for a nameless dependant, the brilliant and advantageous offers which had so repeatedly been offered to her acceptance.

He avowed his intention to make one more effort to extort the secret connected with himself from the bosom of the Dean of L——; and then sorrowfully declared, that if he failed in the attempt, he must endeavour henceforth to bury all solicitude about it, when no resurrection should hereafter disturb that repose he hoped to enjoy in wedded life.

Our fair orphan sympathised in his uneasiness, but generously sought to mitigate its effects. To Molesworth she could not plead in vain; and peace and serenity once more illumined the countenance of each.

CHAP. VIII.

Hope, blessed Hope, oh never leave my heart,
Still with thy witching smiles new joy impart;
Still round my brow thy blooming wreath entwine,
And though thou oft deceiv'st, oh still be mine!
Ah, blessed Hope!—————
Strew in my path thy never-fading flowers!
Still let Imagination's pencil gay,
Dipp'd in bright tints, some distant bliss pourtray,

MISS PYE.

The Summer-House.

THIS day's post brought a letter, bearing the date of Heath-House, on Salisbury Plain, from Lord Edgeworth.

He simply stated, that he had returned home alone; that his daughter had sealed
her

her own destiny ; and that he could now no longer interfere in her future proceedings. He feelingly, but slightly, touched on the recent demise of Mr. Nugent ; expressed his approbation of the asylum to which she had repaired, as he avowed no wish to press her return to Heath-House, being aware that his gloomy habits, and rooted melancholy, rendered him no meet associate for the young and happy. He therefore, for her own sake, was anxious she should remain in the more cheerful precincts of Sudley-Hall. If, however, circumstances should render his mansion convenient, although he was convinced it could never be desirable, its doors would ever be open to receive his highly-estimated ward, the daughter of his regarded friend ; while he trusted he should never suffer his own griefs to absorb and distract his mind from the performance of that sacred trust which he held, as the delegated guardian of her Ladyship.

The calm of settled despair seemed to
breathe

breathe through the language of this letter. The desertion of his daughter had struck the final blow to his every remaining hope. This last solace, wrested from his fond arms, had completed the anguish which, for years, had bowed the separated husband. His heart had long groaned beneath a secret weight of unutterable woe; yet the bursting tide of grief had never proclaimed the source from whence the waters of affliction sprang; its turbulent waves dashed against the seat of existence, and its billows threatened to overwhelm and annihilate the shattered bark.

It may here be necessary to mention, that our heroine had both felt and expressed much interest for Mr. and Mrs. Gifford, the worthy couple of the parsonage. The curate she had seen, and, with pain, traced the affliction under which he was evidently sinking, from the depraved conduct of his only child; but Mrs. Gifford had never, since her erring elopement, been

been visible to any individual, save Mrs. Moreland. She was now confined to her bed with illness, produced by the wretched state of her mind, and was not expected ever to recover.

Every kindness and attention that it was possible to exert, were tendered by Mrs. Moreland; but to assuage the grief produced by fatal and irreparable cause, was futile. Happiness could never again beam on the inhabitants of the parsonage; and in the exercise of his religious duties, the man of God could alone derive a remaining source of consolation.

Weeks passed on, and eventually produced the long-expected letter from Mrs. Nugent, the sight of whose signature revived all the past in her mind, and a sigh, deep and melancholy, burst from her bosom. Poor Fanny, with her usual candour, announced that she had employed her maid upon the occasion, from inability of wielding the pen herself; she spoke of her recent loss, and, in her accustomed language,

guage, bewailed the untimely death of her benefactor; but soon was her attention diverted into another channel. Farmer Dobbins and his sister, with her daughters, occupied their full portion of her paper; while her old lover and kind friend, Giles, was found lurking in every corner. The two sheets of large paper, nearly the dimensions of a lawyer's brief, detailed successive anecdotes, in which Giles bore a conspicuous part; and although the rustic Fanny was not herself perhaps aware of the progress he had made, our heroine, ere she had closed the letter, drew surmises of the future; but, sensible that the beautiful widow would have been shocked had she been conscious of the conclusions which her candid little history had engendered, she prudently concealed her own discoveries.

The unhappy owner of Hillgrove Abbey had quitted Dorsetshire soon after his friend Stavenant. The sight of Maria in London had again revived all the effervescence of his former love. Accustomed from childhood

hood to have free indulgence granted to his every passion, his every wish, the heart of Craven, at a more mature age, was little calculated to submit to the controul of harsh unrelenting reason. In vain he now flew from one dissipation to another; he frequented, in routine, all the fashionable places of resort that England could afford, save Cheltenham. Honour there forbade his entrance. He was conscious that the presence of the beloved object would subdue the better feelings of his nature. At a distance, he could view Maria as the wife of his friend; but, in seeing her, he contemplated the mistress of his warmest affections—a being who had avowed reciprocal attachment, and whom he believed enduring anguish equal to his own.

Another month elapsed; and in vain had the heiress scrutinized the conduct of her lover; it appeared at once to defy the power of the most jealous suspicion to misinterpret. Candid, generous, and sincere, the character of Molesworth rather gained

gained than lost by investigation; while himself, freed from the presence of the object who had awakened his apprehension, now became tranquillized into a more rational conviction of the attachment of his beloved Zitella; and, resting in fond confidence on the evidence she had afforded of her warm affections, the rays of hope once more gilded his path of life; and, dazzled with the refulgent illuminations, he heeded not how transient might prove the existence of this meteor of love.

It was early one morning, in the subsequent week, that Zitella, having risen somewhat before the usual hour, repaired to a small summer-house, purposing to arrange therein some little fanciful decorations of her own invention, which she had planned as an agreeable surprise to Mrs. Moreland, who she knew highly valued any attention of the kind.

Some little time was spent in the execution of her undertaking, which was nearly completed, when she perceived a folded letter

letter lying on the ground, which she raised, conceiving it very possible that it might have been dropped by herself; but on referring to the direction, found it addressed to "*Charles Morcton, Esq.*" and the seal broken.

Somewhat surprised, as she knew no person of that name who visited at Sudley-Hall, nor indeed had ever heard any of the family make mention of such a one, she placed the letter upon a table near her, until she should have completed her employment ; and then, taking it in her hand, to make inquiry as to the owner, she leisurely crossed the lawn.

Upon entering the breakfast-room, she beheld only Clarence Molesworth; and, after the first morning salutations, as the letter yet rested in the hand of Zitella, he laughingly exclaimed, he should certainly become jealous of the writer of her early *billet-doux*, since her eyes so often reverted to it.

“ Rather,” she replied, smiling, “ my
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mysterious letter, for the address, nay even the hero, is incognito. Perhaps you may assist me as to who will lay claim to it."

And she playfully held up the letter to the view of Clarence.

He started back; every vestige of colour forsook his countenance; he almost wildly wrested the letter from her petrified hand; and, having secured it, dropped into a chair, exclaiming, "Gracious Heaven! my carelessness has perhaps discovered all!—my solemn promise will appear broken!"

Zitella gazed on him with amazement; suspicion shot its chilling current through her bosom; and with coldness she returned, "The evidently apprehended *discovery*, Mr. Molesworth, could not be effected by me, through the medium of a letter directed to another."

"Zitella, beloved Zitella!" he exclaimed, as if roused by recollection to effort, "from you I could not have apprehended danger, under any form; but all are not to be relied on with equal confidence. Tell
me

me then, in mercy to my feelings, tell me where you found this fatal letter? and whither it has passed through other hands than your's?"

Zitella repeated the circumstance literally, and then advanced towards the door, to quit the room.

He darted forwards, on perceiving her intention, and, grasping her hand within his own, repeated, in a hurried voice, "May I venture to make one request?"

"Of what nature?" returned Zitella, somewhat coldly.

"I will explain, as far as rests within my power.—This letter has been unwarily dropt; but a necessity exists for its concealment. By entrusting it to my hand, you may rely it shall no more be subjected to accident, nor will any other eye, save that for which it was intended, investigate its contents. Will you indulge me, by a compliance with my request, of neither mentioning the name of Moreton, or adverting to the circumstance of the letter?"

“Most readily,” she replied; but rather gravely added, “You surely give me credit for none of those foibles with which your sex delight to deck those of mine.—*Curiosity* has no place, you conceive, in my bosom?”

“None,” he returned, with quickness, “where the peace or honour of another is interested!”

“Your terms are strong,” she rejoined; with increased gravity; “and by robbing me of curiosity, you have supplied her place, by generously giving me a double share of *credulity*, for which I ought to thank you; for the one has been criminal since the days of Mrs. Lot, and the other is allowed to be only an amiable weakness.”

Then, without waiting his reply, she left the room, nor returned until the family were assembled at breakfast.

The meal was almost untasted by Molesworth. He viewed the unusual gravity of
Zitella

Zitella with painful apprehension, and appeared unhappy, miserable, and dejected. He spoke little; but watched every turn of her countenance with visible anxiety; and the moment circumstances favoured a *tête-à-tête*, he addressed her with strong emotion—"Dearest Zitella, why this cold, this serious air? Could the trifling incident of the morning have produced so great an effect on your mind, as to engender this altered manner?"

"Trifling!" returned the former—"if I might judge from the effect produced on yourself, I might surely conceive the cause momentous."

"To *me* it is deeply momentous," returned Molesworth, with a heavy sigh; "but to you, the circumstances that render it so are unknown."

"And by this mystery naturally creates alarm. Believe me, Molesworth, I would not, with mere idle officious curiosity, seek to penetrate the secret of any individual; and perhaps I should be most delicate with

those I most regard: yet suspicion has, I candidly own, been implanted in my heart. I have been taught, from childhood, to view every professor of love, every matrimonial solicitor, as entertaining interested motives. I meant not, you will believe, to wound your feelings, my friend. I have considered *you* as sincere. My heart has been anxious to elevate you far, very far, above the mercenary herd; to rely on your declarations with fullest confidence; but confidence, I must confess, is necessary to my happiness. But can doubt fail to attend the very evident dread you expressed of some fatal *discovery*?—Answer me then one query; it is all I ask; and if a negative be the reply, I will rest content. Is that *discovery* annexed in any degree to yourself?”

“Zitella, I *cannot* negative the question. It is connected with myself. More I dare not say, for my honour is pledged. I am painfully, but not criminally situated; nor is there a single action of my life which I
would

would shrink from submitting to your knowledge and investigation; for although the errors of humanity have been undoubtedly mine, yet guilt or dishonour never were annexed to—" he hesitated—" myself. Fortune I have none independent, although I have annually, for many years, received from the Dean of L—— the sum of three hundred pounds; but whether I possess a right to claim this, or—" his voice faltered—" I owe it to—charity, I know not. On this subject I have been kept in total ignorance, and am likely ever to be so. Of friends I can boast but two—himself and Colonel Fullerton; but the latter I never knew, until a far more advanced age than that in which memory can trace Dr. Ancaster. I believe either would pronounce my character unblemished, and speak even more warmly in my favour than I have a right to command."

"Enough, Molesworth," said Zitella—"I must, I will believe your asseveration. To *doubt* you would be misery indeed!"

Clarence fondly pressed her to his heart; again he renewed those protestations of disinterested, devoted affection, that a multitude of lovers had previously uttered; but the bosom of Zitella was inclined to receive these in a far different light; and never had man seemed half so true, so fervently, so sincerely fond.

The subsequent week produced a painful separation on the part of our hero, who was summoned to a distant county, to conclude the business he had undertaken to transact for Colonel Fullerton. Dr. Moreland was also under the necessity of repairing to town; and the travellers set out, to proceed a part of their journey together.

CHAP. IX.

Let me lean upon thy bosom ;
What pillow like the bosom of a friend !
For I am sick at heart.

YOUNG.

Consequences of a Promenade.—The unexpected Alliance.

THE excessive heat of a sultry day had much overcome our heroine, and she complained of indisposition, which compelled her to lay down for some hours.

As evening advanced, however, Zitella felt much recovered from this slight illness, and as she knew Mrs. Mulgrave had a packet to make up for her Indian friend,

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Colonel

Colonel Fullerton, which was to go by a ship appointed to sail immediately, and Mrs. Moreland had repaired to the parsonage, she determined upon taking a ramble over the grounds, conceiving the air would be of benefit, and might relieve the intense head-ach with which she was even yet oppressed.

Ordering, therefore, her own servant to follow, with a portable seat, she directed her course across the heath, in the immediate vicinity of the house.

The promenade was peculiarly delightful, as her feelings were attuned to the harmony of surrounding objects. The beauties of nature were bursting from the bed of spring; the air was mild, the distant tinkling of the sheep-bell rested on her ear, although the bleating fold were not visible. Wrapt in the future, and lulled by present harmony of scenery, she proceeded onward across the common; again she looked around her; still the servant did not yet appear. At length, fatigued
with,

with a walk of unusual length, she seated herself beneath the shade of a tree. The sun had long since declined his head; but the air yet retained symptoms of his influence. She indulged in a train of reflection, which led to a comparison between herself and the situation of that poor cottage maid, whose hopes, whose wishes, whose prospects, and whose span of life were concentrated within the narrow circumscribed boundaries of her native village; who felt assured, that every profession of her rustic admirers must be genuine; that the stores of fortune opened not to them a source of duplicity; and that, if not in truth beloved, no sinister motive could urge the declaration.

The image of Clarence Molesworth glided before her mental vision—"Can I doubt—dare I doubt this noble generous index of the heart of him I love? A glance at suspicion renders me unworthy of the attachment of a creature so exalted.—And yet," said busy memory, "did not once

so appear the depraved mercenary Horton? did not so appear the cruel ungenerous husband of my mother—my own father?”

Happily for Zitella, this painful train of reflection was interrupted by the arrival of her servant.

“Where have you been, Darnly?” she exclaimed—“I began to feel alarmed, for I did not observe that you had not followed me, as I had desired, until a few minutes since.”

He excused himself by saying, he had been doubtful which road his Lady had taken, until he had fortunately, by accident, discovered it.

She arose to return home; but had not proceeded far, when the appearance of two men, who were evidently observing her movements, caused uneasy apprehension—“Darnly, these men seem to watch my steps.”

“Indeed, my Lady, they do appear rather suspicious; and those large heavy sticks cannot be merely for use in walking.”

“Is

“Is there no house near?” she returned.

“None, my Lady, within half a mile. They intend crossing the path. Your Ladyship appears pale with apprehension; but no harm shall happen, while I can stand.”

“For Heaven’s sake, Darnly, make no resistance. Better far that I quietly submit, than that life should be endangered upon such an occasion. Give me your arm, for I feel faint with dread.”

Zitella leaned on the arm of the footman, and the two strangers approached.

“Fear not, my Lady,” cried Darnly: “the arm of one honest man will be sufficient to protect you; and that I will do, to the last drop of my blood.”

“Raise not your arm, upon your life!” said the trembling girl—“I would not, for worlds, that mischief should ensue for me.”

The tremendous word “*Stop!*” at length saluted their ears.

The orphan obeyed, from inability to move. With horrid imprecations they demanded

manded her purse, watch, and rings; but, nearly annihilated with terror, she remained immoveable. A bludgeon was raised, and levelled at her head, at the moment Darnly supported her fainting form with one hand, while the other was lifted to ward off the blow—"Villains, cowardly villains, to strike a poor defenceless woman!"

"*Poor!* no, damn it, that is too bad a joke. We know she can afford to be robbed—why, is not she an *heiress!* and as to being defenceless, why, are you not her champion? and now we'll try for it."

She heard no more; total insensibility succeeded, and she sunk upon the ground.

How long this oblivion lasted she was unconscious; but at length life slowly resumed its powers, and with it a recollection of the past. She raised herself upon her hand, and beheld Darnly extended upon the ground, a small distance from her, apparently without sense or motion. A shriek, a dreadful shriek, issued from her lips;

lips; terror lent artificial strength, and she leapt upon her feet—"Gracious Heaven, he is dead!"

A faint murmur essayed a wish for articulation. She ran towards him, and, raising his head, beheld him covered with blood. In agony she looked around; no breathing object met her aching sight, and her screams were lost in distance. Almost in a state of distraction, she implored him, if sensible of the question, to advise her what to do, or where to seek for aid?

After repeated efforts, he faintly articulated, "I am dying, my dear Lady; but I have saved you from being murdered, and I die contented!"

"Noble creature!" she returned, "and must I stay here and see you expire for want of help? Gracious God! what will become of him? What shall I do?"

The distant roll of approaching wheels at this moment were the most joyful sounds that could reach her ear. She ran towards it, and discovered a chaise, with persons in
it.

it. She stopped the carriage, and related, in scarcely intelligible language, her tale of horror. The traveller, who professed himself to be a tradesman, going home to his family, after a few days absence, instantly alighted, and approached the wounded man—"The poor fellow does indeed appear almost in the last agonies. I doubt, if we attempt to move him, whether he will survive it."

Zitella wrung her hands in despair, and, while tears streamed down her pallid cheeks, exclaimed, "He must die, if he remain here:—blessed stranger, for the love of Heaven, assist him into the chaise, and convey him to the nearest house."

"I will do my best endeavour," returned the man; and calling the postillion to him, they lifted Darnly, between them, into the carriage.

He complained much of the pain attendant upon removal; but entreated they would carry him to his sister's house, rather than any where else.

Zitella

Zitella hastily informed them of her address, and begged the good Samaritan they had met with would complete his work of kindness, and inform her as speedily as possible of the state of the wounded man.

"But what is to become of you, Madam? You must not be left here."

"My home is but at a very small distance now," she rejoined; "and, by crossing the fields, I shall arrive in a few minutes. My imprudence in rambling so far from the house has been the cause of all this mischief to my unfortunate servant. But do not lose time, my good Sir, for he may bleed to death in the interim."

The carriage slowly proceeded, as Darnly rested in the arms of the stranger. Anxiety had superseded every other feeling in the mind of Zitella, and she gazed after it as long as it was visible; but no sooner had it ceased to be so than uncontrolled terror again pervaded her. She flew, rather than ran, across the heath, and panting, almost
breathless

breathless with speed and alarm, she reached the house.

Her purse, her watch, a very costly diamond brooch, and several valuable rings, were gone ; but these were secondary considerations, while, as the hall door yielded to her reiterated peals for admission, she sunk senseless into the arms of the astonished servant, whose loud exclamations soon brought every individual of the family within hearing to her succour.

Great was the consternation excited by the appearance of the invalid, who was immediately carried to her chamber ; and long was it ere returning sense rewarded the efforts of those around.

The image of the dying Darnly flitted before her imagination, and for some minutes tears and unintelligible expressions of terror alone were heard. At length, however, reason resumed the reins, and she explained the dreadful cause of her illness.

The officers of justice were dispatched
in

in pursuit of the offenders ; and a servant, at the same time, set off for the first house on the entrance to the town of Kesselton, where had been the direction, to inquire the fate of Darnly. The return of the former proclaimed their attempts to have been in vain ; but the latter was fraught with intelligence, that relieved the distress of Zitella.

Darnly was pronounced to be safe at the house of his sister ; but that, although he had escaped with life, it had been at the expence of the loss of use to one arm.

Our heroine recollected that it had been in her cause, and determined upon the course she should pursue ; therefore, without consulting any but her own feelings, on the impulse of the moment, immediately returned her messenger with pecuniary assistance, and wrote a letter to the attorney of Lord Edgeworth, to prepare an instrument of legal form, whereby she awarded one hundred pounds per annum to Darnly during

during his life. She then dictated another epistle to her guardian, and, being under age, requested an acquiescence in her benefaction, briefly announcing it as the reward of personal service, and deferring an explanation until they should meet.

In the course of a fortnight, the expected packet in reply reached her; and, breaking the seal, the law-deed first met her eyes. She immediately signed, and dispatched it to Darnly; and then sat down to peruse the letter of Lord Edgeworth.

It accorded an assent to her wishes, in confirmation of what he had personally assured her, of his perfect reliance on her discretion; at the same time delicately hinting, that as the annuity was a liberal one, he doubted not she had been careful it was *well bestowed*; that he had been much at a loss to discover what personal benefit she could have received from a menial, that could entitle him to such a reward; but as he entertained no doubt
that

that the object, she must have assured herself, was worthy of such consideration, he had not hesitated in granting her request.

Having finished the perusal, Zitella refolded and placed the letter in her desk; and, with greater satisfaction than she had experienced since her late alarm, joined the party assembled at dinner, of which Dr. Moreland was once more a member, having returned that morning from London.

The successive week brought Clarence Molesworth, and happiness shed its purest beams over the life of the lovers during the space of another month.

We have already cursorily mentioned the lady of the manor, who had heretofore been the temporary patroness of the fallen Miss Gifford, and whose mansion was situated about three miles from Sudley Hall, whose inhabitants she had visited for many years. Repeated solicitations had been tendered on her part to draw Lady Zitella Herbert to Farnham Lodge; but she had never,
since

since the death of her uncle, emerged into a party abroad. But as near six months were now elapsed, and as Lady Farnham expressed herself much offended by the constant refusal of the heiress to become a guest at her house, she at length consented to accept an invitation, which promised only a small select party of friends.

It was on the morning of the appointed day, that as she was retiring to her dressing-room, after breakfast, the following letter was put into her hands:—

“ YOUR old servant, Darnly, my Lady, begs to claim your attention for a few minutes. The lesson he means to impart may be an useful one; and he hopes you will render it so, for, in fact, you stand in need of counsel, and may consider yourself fortunate that you have escaped with so trifling a loss as my annuity. The robbery

robbery was committed by an accomplice of mine. The wounds inflicted, which caused the pearly drops to stream from your eyes, were ideal; and having succeeded in all I expected to obtain, I have bid your Ladyship a long adieu. I have sold my annuity for a comfortable sum, and with the cash in my pocket, leave England for ever.

“The brief detail of my life accept as follows:—

“I am the natural son of an attorney, and was educated at a charity-school. This in time recommended me as quill-driver to my father; and, in his office, I picked up a little of every thing, except what was good. Greater depredations succeeded petty ones, and I was at length entirely discarded. Want, and innate depravity, introduced me to a set of men who live by *ways and means*, known, I am convinced, to all degrees of men, from the *HIGHEST* to the *LOWEST* class—with this difference, that their peculations are greater or lesser, as chance

chance or fortune may enable them. An unlucky detection placed me under the cognizance of the law, which I had hitherto escaped; and I was confined in a county jail, whence having obtained my freedom by stealth, and fearful of discovery, I adopted the disguise of a liveried servant, and offered myself to your Ladyship in that capacity. The gentleman from whom you accepted a written recommendation of me was *myself*, as these characters, if you compare them, will testify.

“ That your charity was *indiscriminately* profuse, I soon was convinced; and I therefore levied contributions upon your purse, at pleasure. Thus, instead of applying a part of the affluence Heaven had bestowed upon you to *useful* purposes, you often lavishly squandered it among the worthless and unprincipled, not deigning yourself, as you ought to have done, to ascertain the truth of details, poured into your ears by the claimants on your bounty. Even by deputation, this duty might have been performed,

formed, had you been careful in the election of your almoner; but here again you erred, for was not *I* one of the many to whom you assigned this trust? and, after my confession, you will not doubt that I considered myself as the first object of consideration.

“Tired, at length, of a life of servitude, I cast about for the means of relinquishing it, and fixed upon the scheme I carried into execution. My vehement declaration of defending you, gave me a claim upon your gratitude, and I anticipated the effect which it produced. An *heiress* could not do otherwise than reward liberally; and I built upon this circumstance securely. Two of my accomplices were the heroes of bludgeon memory; and a third was the travelling tradesman, to whose care I was consigned. The sanguinary appearance which terrified you so effectually, I was provided with by a bottle in my pocket. Instead of the house of a respectable sister, I reached that of one of my friends; and even here,

a little circumspection would have undeceived you; but I knew the impetuosity of your disposition, that sober dispassionate reason seldom was consulted, and I rested with certainty upon its effects.

“ The deed of gift secured, I have sold the annuity, and, with its produce, now seek my fortune in another clime.

“ Adieu, Madam.—Believe, something like gratitude dictates this endeavour to unveil the many impositions which I have myself seen practised on *the heiress*. As, however, I may have been willing to benefit by your credulous benevolence myself, I would spare you the thefts of brother knaves, and strenuously recommend to you more circumspection in electing future objects for liberality, who, I trust, may be more deserving than

Your *ci-devant* servant,

JAMES DARNLY.”

“ Gracious

“ Gracious God !” cried Zitella, after perusing the letter, in breathless horror, disappointment, and regret, “ how largely does imposition contribute to the miseries of an heiress !”

Mrs. Mulgrave had entered the room, the door of which was unclosed, as she uttered this exclamation; and, taking her yet trembling hand, repeated, “ Imposition, my dear Zitella, is a tax upon wealth, that all must, in some degree, pay; and when it teaches us the lesson of circumspection, it will perhaps be found a tithe well bestowed. But may I inquire from what source this agitation arises ?”

Our heroine explained the cause, and the blushes of self-humiliation at being thus easily made the dupe of profession and appearance, even in a servant, were superseded by the far more poignant distress at acknowledging the rooted depravity of another son of earth.

An association of ideas forcibly brought Clarence Molesworth to her view.—If a man like James Darnly, unpolished and unlettered, could thus grossly deceive her, was it not far more probable that an individual, in whom the refinements of society were centered, who at once possessed the suavity of manner, the witchery of address, could cast a veil over her penetration, and, by seducing her imagination, lull her judgment into artificial slumber?—Again the image of a Horton glided before her; a Milford next succeeded, a Darnly, and a hundred more trifling instances, in which she had been the dupe of her benevolence, although certainly in a less striking degree. Her heart trembled; it feared lest Clarence Molesworth should complete the host of imposition; yet love groaned beneath the cruel doubt: but it was the very extent of her attachment that rendered Zitella most apprehensive. She knew, from observation, its effects, in blinding the ken of
reason,

reason, and, overpowered by contending emotions, she wept on the shoulder of her venerable monitress.

Mrs. Mulgrave read the direful effects of suspicion in the speaking countenance of Zitella. She was conscious it was no amiable feature in the breast of youth; and however she acknowledged that worldly policy would have sanctioned a mother inculcating this germ in the bosom of an heiress, she yet regretted it, as a blemish in the otherwise exalted mind of our heroine. She viewed it as a misery in itself, and deplored that the depravity of mankind should render it a necessary guardian appendage to a wealthy female, in this age of mercenary speculation.

The arguments of Mrs. Mulgrave, her persuasive eloquence, in counterpoising the influence of this inauspicious foe to happiness, and more especially in wedded life, had never produced less effect. A melancholy presentiment seemed to usurp sudden dominion over the heart of Zitella,

as she despairingly exclaimed, “ *The heiress* is fated to be the dupe of impostor. She inherits all the portion of miseries that were centered in her parent. Her misfortunes pursue me, and hope no longer dares to rest even on Clarence Molesworth.”

CHAP. X.

"Oh how the spring of love resembleth well
The uncertain glory of an April day!"

Modern Friendship, and invidious Insinuations.

WITH these reflections of the morning, it was natural that the mind of Zitella should be overcast with gloom, when compelled to accompany Dr. Moreland to Farnham Lodge; for Mrs. Gifford being now in a dying state, Mrs. Moreland had sent an apology for the day, for she could not resolve to quit her friend at this awful moment.

The circle assembled consisted of about

14

twenty,

twenty, all inmates of the mansion, with the exception of two neighbouring families, and Clarence Molesworth, who had recently been made known to Lady Farnham.

Among the former was Miss Clairmond, who flew towards our heroine with unwonted energy, and tendered professions of regard, which were not quite so warmly reciprocated; for as a friend, Zitella was not inclined to rank the silly insincere Euphemia, however she might be inclined to extend those civilities due to a former acquaintance.

“The wind is terribly annoying, to be in the western direction, to-day,” said Lady Farnham, after a pause in conversation:—“it conveys to us that odious bell tolling for good Mrs. Gifford—indeed, I wish her soul had tarried a little longer on earth—at least until an easterly wind had arisen, to waft its *memento* into a contrary direction.”

A laugh ensued from many of the party,
at

at this happy “playful sally,” as it was styled by Major Hammond.

“Pray do not be such wicked creatures,” resumed the former, in a tone of whining softness—“The poor woman is much to be pitied; and I would not laugh her out of the world either—You have heard, Lady Zitella, no doubt, of the shocking *faux-pas* of her daughter? Was it not a lamentable history?”

“Assuredly,” said our heroine; “and its effects most truly afflicting to all those who regard, as sincerely as I do, the worthy parents of the unhappy girl.”

“Yes, I understood your Ladyship condescended to notice them very much; and I was also inclined to commiserate the poor creature; so I took her with me to Bath, which is the matrimonial English market for the offspring of half-pay officers, or poor clergymen’s daughters, when they have what I call dashing public faces; which is, in fact, only something showy and striking, without any necessity to be

critically beautiful; and I really thought Miss Gifford would have managed very well in securing an old gouty valetudinarian, or some stripling idiot, just in possession of his estates, and first emerging from the leading-strings of a guardian. That she might, therefore, have all those personal advantages, so necessary to aid conquests of this nature, my toilette always supplied her with *rouge*—an article beyond her purse, poor thing, to purchase; and what with a few fashionable dresses, and my instructions how to play her cards, the poor clergyman's daughter became quite a Bath belle; but she had not the talent to convert her admirers into lovers, and the search for a husband completely failed; in consequence of which, I understood, while I was in London, that Miss Gifford, entirely spoiled by her Bath excursion, had eloped from the dull precincts of the parsonage, with a *protector* of another description; and I was quite shocked, on my return, to learn the horrid and extraordinary effect it had produced

duced on that worthy soul her mother. I desired one of my servants might frequently call, and make inquiry, in my name, after her health; but I really do not know if he ever went, domestics are so careless about these kind of messages. But I really had no notion that old Prudence would have carried the joke so far as to have grieved herself to death."

Disgusted at this unfeeling speech of Lady Farnham, our heroine felt relieved that the subject was interrupted by a summons to dinner, where effort alone supported her spirits, in that tone necessary to sustain any part in the conversation of those around.

After the ladies had arisen from table, they sauntered out over the pleasure-grounds, in different directions; and Miss Clairmond offering her arm to our heroine, they pursued their walk *tête-à-tête*. Some trifling topics having been discussed, Euphemia resumed—"Are you not, my dear Lady Zitella, among the wonders of the day,
16 inclined

inclined to place that at the head of the list, of Mr. Molesworth being admitted into select society?"

"Certainly not!" said the former—
"Why should I rank this in the list of events to excite *the wonder of the day*?"

"What a question!—Why, is it not most extraordinary that a mere adventurer should be thus countenanced?"

"An adventurer!" exclaimed Zitella, while the indignant blush mounted to her cheeks.

"Yes, my dear friend, an adventurer; for every one calls him so; and yet every person of consideration admits him to his house. But the Dean of L—— first presented him to all of his friends; and I understand he had very potent reasons for it; but the gentleman became presuming, and aspired even to the daughter of the dignitary. But this was a step beyond expectation; so the good man interfered; and, *entre nous*, it is said," she added, lowering her voice, "that Molesworth threatened some *discovery* as to the very miraculous

culous and sudden preferment of the reverend divine, if he did not consent to receive him as a son-in-law. The Dean was alarmed, as my old acquaintance informed me; and she had known him all her life, and remembered the surprise of everybody at his rapid fortune and distinctions; but as Ambition had now reared her head, even to ducal honours, for the little Marian, he suggested an ingenious plan to soften and divert the anger of Clarence—which was, that if he would relinquish his designs upon the hand of Miss Ancaster, he would undertake to secure him a much higher prize in the matrimonial lottery, and exert his influence to gain for him a very wealthy heiress, who was quite a country girl, and over whose mind, from contingent events, he boasted considerable influence. So the poor child was to be the gilded bait to avert the threatened storm; but I have not yet been able to learn her name or connexions, the business has been arranged so secretly; and it is said, that greater political

tical abilities never were displayed than those exhibited by this dignified character. —But you appear ill, Lady Zitella," she added, suddenly pausing in her detail; "the heat has doubtless overcome you. Shall we return?"

"Oh no," returned the former, with a forced smile—"I will rest here a few minutes, and shall then be so well recovered from fatigue, as to proceed on our ramble;" and she almost sunk upon a garden-seat. Euphemia took the vacant place beside her, and, with great expressions of interest in her indisposition, presented an essence-box, which proved of real efficacy to our oppressed orphan, who, after a short pause, continued, "Is this the general impression as to the conduct of the Dean of L——— and Mr Molesworth? and if so, what does rumour add respecting the female in request?"

"She is almost universally pitied, poor thing," rejoined Euphemia, in a tone of contemptuous commiseration; "but, you
know,

know, there are always some individuals who will laugh at these credulous puppets relying upon the verity of every interested professor. Your Ladyship and myself have been rather too much experienced in the men of this dreadful age we live in, to be thus easily deluded. But, in general, the creed of these country heroines is, all for love, or wealth well lost. They never marry according to just expectation; and a needy adventurer, with fine person, and persuasive address, is certain of proving the elected knight; for, clad in a mail of romance, they brave "*the world's dread laugh.*"

"I thought, Miss Clairmond, you, of all others, were too partial to this coat of mail, to view it in a ridiculous light."

"Once," said the unblushing Euphemia, "once I was proselyte to the vagaries of *imagination*; but the example of Sir Horace Lister's silly indulgence in this mania, by the hasty marriage he has formed with the wild girl of the desert, has been an effectual antidote to the romantic malady; and
reduced

reduced me to sober reason, and common sense."

"The *wild girl of the desert* has, I trust, a very civilized heart, possessing both birth and education, and will soon assimilate to those customs society may claim. Simplicity of manners will possibly always attend her; but her husband will doubtless be happy to wave the absence of the frivolities of life, in consideration of more valuable acquisitions and distinctions."

A smile of derision sat on the lips of the angered Euphemia, as this eulogium was past on her successful rival; and here it may be necessary to inform the reader, that the ever pliant heart of Miss Clairmond had, in the defection of Sir Horace Lister, turned its affections towards Clarence Molesworth: but as his were not likely to be secured by sporting the character of a *visionary*, that of Miss More's heroine of perfection was deemed more probable to attract, and was for a time attempted; but finding even the execution of this arduous undertaking

undertaking futile in its effect, not only in gaining the heart, but even the attention of this favoured individual, he was, at convenience, transformed into "the mere adventurer," the "mercenary fortune-hunter," in the fervent generous hope that this artful insinuation would operate successfully on the weak and most vulnerable part of the mind of Lady Zitella Herbert.

In regard to the Duke of Somerton, it was most true, that he was a very warm admirer of the infantine Marian; and having suffered so severely from the imperious disposition and violent temper of his divorced partner, viewed the timidity and mildness of genuine nature, which Miss Ancaster displayed, as the first and most essential virtues of the female character. His Grace, however, had no serious intentions, nor was perhaps himself aware how high the *naïve* belle ranked in his heart. If, however, proposals had been made, they would, in all probability, have been crowned with acceptance.

Mrs.

Mrs. Ancaster had always entertained the dread of a rival daughter; but depending far more on manner, and the *agremens* of conversation, than personal charms, she resolved, that in these, at least, Marian should never dispute the palm; and, for this purpose, rather than the reality of maternal affection, which she so anxiously displayed, she had, from earliest infancy, strengthened and encouraged that painful timidity, which was in some degree inherent in her nature; and, by thus yielding an awkward embarrassment to her manner, hoped effectually to prevent her coming forward to eclipse maturer attractions; and, by bringing her out early into society, at once to establish her own claim to the title of *la belle mère*, while she felt less comparison would then be drawn at her first *debut*, when, as an apparent child, she would be overlooked, and her face no longer retain the attractive charm of novelty, when a more advanced age would
render

render her a dangerous competitor for admiration.

This timidity of character in Miss Ancaster rendered her perfectly quiescent in the will of her mother, whom she trembled to displease, even in the most trifling point. It is true, her heart was in reality tenderly inclined towards the resemblance of Charles Moreton; but its affections were never violent nor ungovernable. Mild, gentle, and unassuming, she would have failed in resolution to contradict the wishes of Mrs. Ancaster, in regard to an alliance brilliant as that of the Duke of Somerton.

CHAP. XI.

" It would raise your pity but to see the tears
Force through her snowy lids their melting course."

The Boudoir.

MOLESWORTH had named the present week for his important conversation with the Dean of L——, and to which we must acknowledge both looked forward with mingled hope and dread ; and now the important hour drew near, as the following morning was appointed for his quitting the country, to carry into effect his projected visit, and its important consequences.

He bore with him the ardent prayers and fearful hopes of the beloved object of his affections ;

affections; but as this absence was not expected to exceed the rapid travelling of an anxious lover, no correspondence was arranged, as the interview was to take place, by appointment, the day after his arrival.

Time hung heavy in the interim, on the anxious Zitella; and day succeeded day, only producing from every stage the tender inquiries of Clarence, though he could not even hope, from the rapidity of his movements, for the gratification of reply.

The day previous to the one expected for his return, the party at Farnham Lodge were to dine *en famille* at Dr. Moreland's; and the hour of assembling had almost approached, when the bell at the gate announced an arrival, and Zitella, the next moment, was folded to the heart of her lover.

The joyful greeting was no sooner past, than our heroine examined, with fearful ken, the countenance of Clarence; and, pale with apprehension, she discovered no pleasurable intelligence, beyond the momentary

mentary gleam, which had illuminated it on his *entré*, at beholding her.

In a low voice, she inquired if the interview had taken place?

“ Yes,” was the laconic reply.

The carriages were, at that moment, announced, and the guests they contained entered the room.

The gloom of Molesworth, which was now perceptible, became contagious—at least to that object nearest his aching heart; and vain were the efforts of either to rally. It, however, passed unnoticed by all, save Mrs. Mulgrave; and when the ladies of the party retired to the drawing-room, the good old lady, taking the arm of the orphan, led her to an adjoining *boudoir*.

“ Your Ladyship has not appeared to accustomed advantage. Your face was formed to display the attractions of Thalia, and when Melpomene usurps her influence, her sombre graces convey not half the charms of her sister-excellence.—But an old woman should not be too inquisitive,”

she

she added ; “ the quarrels of lovers, we are told, are but the foundation for a renewal of the passion.”

“ No,” replied Zitella, with unusual gravity, for we must own the reports of Miss Clairmond, although by no means implicitly credited, had yet left some unpleasant impression—“ The situation you so jocularly describe is not precisely mine ; yet to you I will honestly confess, that my heart is not at ease. I would joyfully resign all I possess for competence ; or, would to Heaven Clarence Molesworth were placed on such elevation, that *equality* of birth, fortune, and worldly consideration, would silence the voice of slander, and evidence the superiority of his mind over the grovelling herd, who, under every form, attempt to depreciate him.—Ah, that he were but in the situation of Craven ! would that no possible sickening doubt could arise !—but now, even in my happiest moments, a kind of foreboding dread hangs——”

The sentence was arrested, a deep sigh near her caused a start of surprise, and she beheld Molesworth at her elbow. He had entered unperceived, and, by a directing nod from Miss Clairmond, playfully approached, with the intent of surprising the friends; but arrested, transfixed, by the conclusion of the last speech of his affianced bride, he remained rooted to the spot, and even unconscious that his presence was unknown.

Embarrassment sat on the brow of each; but that of Molesworth was soon succeeded by the deepest melancholy. In vain was every effort made to divert his attention; he was insensible to all, and wrapt in gloomy meditation. The evening past in total abstraction on his side—in actual misery on that of our heroine; and when they separated for the night, strong emotion shook the frame of the lover, as, pressing the hand of his mistress to his lips, he emphatically said, “*Farewell, Zitella!*”

Twice she attempted to stop him; but
the

the fear of raillery from the individuals who formed the party checked her purpose. Melancholy and wretched, she retired to bed, but not to sleep; and unrefreshed the dawn of morning found her.

She arose, and endeavoured to beguile the tedious moments with a book; but the author was tedious, the subject dry, and the volume eventually discarded. She descended the stairs, and walked upon the lawn; still none but servants appeared.

At length, a horseman approached, and, alighting, presented her with a letter.

Commiserate, reader, the wretched heir-ess, when the following lines presented themselves.



“ It is in vain, Zitella, that I seek to persuade myself of that which I would die to succeed in. Your reason is at war with your feelings, and the tenderness of your nature recoils from the deliberate infliction of such misery as awaits

the declaration which yet hovers on your lips.

‘ *The birth, fortune, and pretensions, of Lord Arthur Craven,*’ render him, in your eyes, as well as that of a discriminating world, a more eligible connexion than the undone, the wretched, the dependant Molesworth.

“ You have candidly declared the suspicions early ingrafted by the respected, but unfortunate, author of your being, and the miseries which had arisen to her, from deceptive appearances. You are high-born; I am—no matter what! You are rich; I am poor. You *perhaps* love, but dread the possibility of the object being influenced by unworthy motives; while I am too proud, too sensible of the purity of my own affections, to bear the glance of suspicion: yet I am without the means of evincing the sincerity of my professions. These repellants can never coalesce; and your happiness is, to me, the dearest object the universe presents; and having, during
the

the few last months, analized your mind, I am satisfied, either that your entire affections are not my own, or that *doubt* still exists, as attached to me. Alas! has not your own lips repeated as much? Gracious God! what would be the result of either conclusion, if hereafter confirmed! You, in becoming the victim of your own generosity, would fail to confer happiness which was not participated; and I—But I fear to attempt depicting what language cannot pourtray.

“ The projected interview has taken place with the Dean of L———. He is deaf to all my entreaties, my prayers, my expostulations. They are opposed to an *oath* he has sworn, and they are as feathers in the scale of justice. His replies to my interrogatories are inconclusive, vague, incoherent, contradictory.

“ I dare not proceed.—My resolution is fixed. Various circumstances have arisen to confirm my belief of what is best calculated for your future peace; and to
K 2 obtain

obtain that, what would I not sacrifice! —what *have* I not sacrificed! Your six months' probation forces itself, with all its concomitant circumstances, upon my recollection. The hand which was once *offered to me*, and received as the sacred pledge of mutual affection, was scarcely relieved from my grasp, ere the valued gift was retracted, and I was enjoined to *forget* it had ever been bestowed. The simple observations of poor Lucy crimsoned your face with blushes, while your eloquent countenance detailed to me the contending emotion of your mind. True, you might not have regarded me as solely influenced by mercenary views; but if they are supposed to exist at all, it would goad me to madness. As the months of painful probation, of torturing uncertainty, have worn away, unwonted gloom has gradually taken possession of your mind. I have more than once surprised you in tears, and almost invariably in pensive rumination. I cannot be blinded to the conviction that

Craven

Craven ranks higher in your esteem. Did not those fatal sentences, last evening, avow it? Did they not even imply more? In an unguarded moment of compassion for me, or, what is still more agonizing, possibly in resentment for some offence of his Lordship, you have given utterance to some expressions to me, which you conceive implicates your honour, and hence you are about to become its victim. No, Lady Zitella, I dare not now look to that prospect which I so lately greeted with rapture. I knew not how severely I should feel the disappointed hopes which I had cherished, as the result of another conference with the Dean of L. ———, until the unexpected declaration of your sentiments to Mrs. Mulgrave, which I unintentionally and unguardedly stole from you. He has, by annihilating my expectations, plunged me into despair.

“ In bidding you adieu, my heart closes itself upon the world. There will your image alone find entrance, of all this earth

can boast. In absence and at distance, your felicity will be ever dear, will be the only solace I shall ever know.

“ I linger over the approaching sentence, for I want fortitude to say—*Adieu!*”

Unfortunate victim of suspicion! temporary insensibility for a time sealed in oblivion *the miseries of the heiress*; and thy inestimable friend, the venerable Mrs. Mulgrave, was the kind attentive nurse, who smoothed the pillow that pressed thy throbbing temples, during a successive painful illness. She sought to infuse tranquillity within thy wounded heart; but vain was every effort. Suspicion and love were the warring tenants of thy bosom, and the extremes of thy character produced the most torturing conflicts nature could sustain!

CHAP. XII.

Fortune is weary of oppressing me :

Through my dark cloud of grief a cheerful ray

Of light breaks forth, and gilds the gloom.

FRANKLIN.

The childish Fortune-Teller.

LONDON once more received the wretched Clarence Molesworth ; but, no longer a member of that gay society in which, the preceding winter, he had been an object of admiration and regard, his resolution to quit England returned again in fullest force. He dreaded each moment receiving intelligence of the matrimonial engagement of Lady Zitella Herbert, with an individual

K 4

claiming

claiming more worldly attractions than himself; and with agony he contemplated Lord Arthur Craven as the elected partner of her connubial life.

Sir Horace Lister, who had frequently met him at the house of his fair relative Mrs. Ancaster, and who had really entertained for him high esteem and great regard, had given him reiterated invitations to his mansion; but importunity on this head was vain, for of no party would Molesworth consent to form a member. At length, however, the young Baronet became seriously offended, and Clarence, aware of the cause, with reluctance agreed to join a professed *en famille* dinner at his house.

Lady Edgeworth, Mrs. and Miss Ancaster, the Miss Harleys, and an elderly gentleman of the name of Lambert, formed the group of invited guests; and these individuals were ranged in a small circle after dinner, when, as usual, the light topics of the day were discussed.

The

The conversation at length descended from the discussion of opera-singers and ballet-dancers, to the still more frivolous subject of fortune-telling.

Wonders were related by the simple Flora of the astrological tribe, which had been detailed to her by honest Gregory and Phœbe of Heath-House; and she at length concluded by gravely assuring the party, that although she was wholly ignorant of the influence of the stars, she was yet able, from the lines of the hand, to certify to each individual whether they should first be overtaken by marriage or death; and requested Arabella Harley would put her abilities in palmistry to the test, by extending her hand, for the purpose of information.

The supercilious spinster smiled at the folly of her young hostess, and recommended her rather to enliven the features of her pensive neighbour, and cheer Mr. Molesworth with her happy prognostics.

She gaily assented; while he, attempting to catch her tone of vivacity, held out his hand, signifying the fluctuation of hopes and fears to which the proposal of his fair auguress had given rise, with forced vivacity.

“Offer a lady your left hand!” cried the laughing Flora—“It is to be hoped you will practise more gallantry, when you receive that of the beautiful mistress you hope I shall award.—No, I reject a consultation with that; so e’en hand me the other.”

The face of Molesworth crimsoned—“When your Ladyship views the demanded hand, the *reason* for withholding it will be obvious, for I doubt if the lines are quite perfect.—Behold the memento of a savage enemy—the bite of a dog, in very early life.”

A piercing shriek was uttered by Lady Edgeworth, who sat next him—“Oh God! it is him! Ancaster has betrayed me!”

Total insensibility succeeded, as she fell from the table.

The

The consternation which followed this alarm may easily be conceived; but the agitation which shook the soul of Molesworth appeared to arrest only the peculiar attention of Mr. Lambert.

Clarence waited but to hear that Lady Edgeworth again breathed, ere he quitted the room, and the next moment the house.

The Viscountess once more regained the powers of her mind; her eyes fearfully glanced around the room; satisfied that the object they dreaded to encounter was no longer there, she closed them again, and, deeply sighing, rested her head on the bosom of her weeping child—"Do not be alarmed, my love; I am better."

"No, my dear mother, you are not better; your countenance is ghastly pale, your lips still quiver, and every limb trembles. Tell me what has caused it?"

"It was accident, Flora, it was a sudden faintness, it was a corporeal malady——"

"Rather a *mental* one, I fear," cried Mr.

K 6

Lambert,

Lambert, significantly—" I was before doubtful, but am now *confirmed*."

The form of Lady Edgeworth shook as with an ague; she turned abruptly from the speaker—" Lead me to a chamber, Sir Horace; I shall feel relieved when removed from this room."

The Baronet raised the Viscountess in his arms, and, with the assistance of Lady Lister, she reached the adjoining apartment.

Doubt and suspicion sat on every brow, though each probably differed in their conclusions. Mirth was banished from the party, and all withdrew, as early as possible, from the recent scene of confusion.

In the mean time, Clarence Molesworth had set out on foot from the house of Sir Horace Lister, with a fleetness that soon exhausted itself; and, throwing himself into the first hackney-coach he met with, at length arrived at the dwelling of Dr. Ancaster. A thundering knock announced an impatient

impatient visitor. The Dean was in his study ; thither Molesworth repaired, and was instantly admitted.

The colour faded from the cheeks of the former, as the latter, in agitated accents, thus addressed him:—"That esteem, Sir, with which I have so long beheld you, has this night received a shock, which no language can describe. Conviction strikes upon my senses, and my senses are bewildered in the wild tumult of awakened hope!—Say, Dr. Ancaster, say who is that being who now addresses you? Lady Edgeworth believes you have betrayed her, betrayed her to *me*!—Wherefore this fear, and why these pallid looks? Speak, I entreat you, for, be assured, concealment is no longer possible."

Still was his auditor silent.

"Impatience such as mine," resumed Molesworth, "brooks no delay—My brain maddens at the picture presented! Declare the cause which has reduced me to seek this explanation."

But,

But, during this address, time had been afforded the divine to reply.

“This intrusion, Mr. Molesworth, is as unexpected as unwelcome. Your language is strangely disrespectful and unbecoming; and your threat correspondent with the tenor of the whole. The *possibility* of concealment you will find *does* exist; and the means you have adopted to induce me to betray myself are futile.”

Molesworth caught the hand of his early friend—“Forgive, dear Sir, the impetuosity of my nature, the present state of my tortured feelings. The means I have adopted did not owe their rise to that source to which you imagine you have traced them. I have acted rather from impulse, than reason or premeditation. Awakened to hope by a singular circumstance, this evening, my ideas ranged wild in the field of conjecture; but, recalled once more to the dominion of rational reflection, I can only recollect your fatherly tenderness, your affectionate,

affectionate, your unwearied, disinterested goodness to me."

" Hold, dear injured youth, ere you unman me quite. I have erred most deeply; but it was at a period when warring passions united to subdue my better principles—when mutual love, happiness, and independence, assailed my feeble reason—when the *preservation of a life*, I flattered myself, would cancel a deed of darkness—but though fruition crowned my expectations, by the possession of all for which I had bartered my peace, *she* had fled the sanctuary of my hitherto spotless bosom; nor have I, since that fatal period, tasted the balm of conscious rectitude. But an oath, solemn and binding, one long since registered above, seals my lips. Circumstance may implicate me, though scarcely a possibility exists of its ever benefitting you; but attend, while I sacredly declare, that the torture should never extract the secret from me.—Adieu! You are in
possession

possession of all that you will ever obtain."

And, rising from his chair, he entered an adjoining closet, locked the door, and replied not even to the supplications of his distracted ward.

CHAP. XIII.

Love hath chas'd sleep from my eyelids,
And made them watchers of my own heart's sorrow.

SHAKESPEARE.

The Trial of Honour.

Thus the stimulating powers of sanguine imagination faded and died away, which had, for some preceding hours, raised the wild hopes of this unfortunate young man.

That night his throbbing temples pressed no pillow of ease; his heart, writhing beneath a load of anguish, in the loss of his beloved Zitella, still turned to contemplate the mysterious fate of Charles Moreton.

Exhausted

Exhausted and overpowered by the violence of his wretched feelings, towards sunrise he sunk into a chair, and senseless stupor, rather than refreshing slumber, succeeded.

From this he was aroused by the entrance of his servant, to inform him that a gentleman was below, who wished to speak to him on business.

"I can transact no business; my mind is unfit for it," he returned, with a violence that alarmed and astonished the domestic, who now subjoined, "Am I to deliver this message, Sir, to the gentleman?"

"Yes, any message—Say that I cannot see him—that I won't see him—and do not interrupt me again."

Ten minutes elapsed, and once more the servant appeared, with a pencilled note—"The gentleman, Sir, desires me to give you this, and waits an answer, for he will not go away without it."

Clarence took the paper.

"A GENTLE-

“ A GENTLEMAN who conceives he may have it in his power very greatly to benefit Mr. Molesworth, earnestly solicits a personal interview, to discuss the very extraordinary incident which occurred the last evening at the house of Sir Horace Lister, as he conceives Mr. Molesworth to be a party very deeply concerned in that event.”

Clarence scarcely remained to read to the conclusion of the note, when with quick, although uncertain step, he descended to the room where the gentleman awaited his reply. Upon entering, he discovered Mr. Lambert.

Mutual bows having past, and acknowledgments being tendered by the former for the apparent interest the latter had evinced in his concerns, his visitor thus subjoined:—“ These acknowledgments, my
good

good Sir, are not due to me, in the very lavish manner which you have extended them. I conceive myself, in this point, merely fulfilling a duty, and performing an act of justice, by the faithful discharge of a sacred trust ; for I have reason, very great reason to imagine, that you were, in early childhood, delegated to my guardianship."

"Gracious God ! then you can inform me to what name I have a rightful claim?"

"That answer confirms me in the impression that you have none to that of *Molesworth*."

Clarence paused.

"Speak, Sir ; it is of the greatest moment to your own interest. The respectability of my character is, I trust, too well established, to render you apprehensive that I shall make an improper or ungenerous use of your confidence. I call upon Almighty Powers to witness, that if my conjecture gain strength from your report, I will exert every endeavour that rests within my ability, and it is great, to restore to you
that

that which has been most infamously purloined ”

“ Hold, Mr. Lambert, in mercy hold !—you have raised my expectations, but to crush them for ever. If ought rests on my revealment of any circumstances connected with my past life, my honour is bound by a sacred promise ; and, let fate take what course it may, I must be neutral, silent ;” and, rising, he paced the room in a hurried disordered manner.

“ Young man,” said the former, “ this promise has been extorted for the vilest purpose ; and being compulsatory, is surely not to be considered binding, at a crisis important as this.”

“ No, Sir, that promise was not compulsatory ; the conditions were candid, open, fair, and intended to benefit myself. I assented to the terms *voluntarily*.”

“ Noble, generous youth ! you have been rendered the dupe of your own excellent heart.—Heavens ! can such a being have been——”

He

He paused, and, leaning his head on his hand, remained some minutes in thoughtful rumination.

Clarence stood in breathless expectation. It was to him the most awful moment of his life ; his fate seemed to hang suspended within his own direction of the important thread of destiny ; his adored Zitella might yet become his ; it was the only chance he could ever now have to aspire to, to regain her ; the dark web of mystery might now be rent asunder, if his lips pronounce the events dependent on the few last years of his life ; but honour forbade the disclosure, and honour was the very soul of existence in the breast of the estimable sufferer.

Mr. Lambert suddenly started from his meditative posture—"Are there no circumstances which you may conceive yourself at liberty to communicate, without infringement of this fatal promise?"

"None ; save that the Dean of L—— has been to me a father, a parental protector, in every sense."

"The

“The Dean of L———!” exclaimed Mr. Lambert, and a smile of content sat upon his features—“the Dean of L——— is a dark concealed villain! He has basely purchased the dignitary he disgraces, by a deed of infamy. Of this I am firmly convinced, in my own mind; but public proof is wanting to establish it in that of the law, and, of course, to reinstate you.”

“You are warm, Mr. Lambert; pardon me, but I cannot hear such language directed towards this excellent friend of my early youth; I cannot conceive your conjecture correct——”

“To discover that it is so, rests with yourself; for unless you assist me to unmask the traitor, he will, in security, triumph over you; for only from your own report of the past, can I hope to gain such proof as will effectually serve our cause. No doubt, I again repeat, exists in my own breast; but the accusation it will produce is horrible, most heavy and extensive.

tensive.—Suffer me to examine your right hand.”

Molesworth extended it.

“Have you any recollection in what way this remarkable wound was given?”

“A very faint one. I only recollect it was inflicted by a dog, which impressed itself more powerfully on my mind, from having been followed, for some successive years, by remembered terror of the approach of that animal.”

“Again, young man, I repeat to you, that evidence is strong, and that *proof* probably rests with yourself alone. Say, then, whether you are likely to accede to my conditions?—to consider your promise, as I do, ‘more honoured in the breach than the observance?’”

“I sincerely thank you, Sir, for the generous interest you have taken in my concerns; but no sophistry can lull the voice of conscience. My *honour* I consider pledged; and, let the result be what it may,

may, I cannot reconcile myself to its infringement."

The expression of Mr. Lambert's countenance was equivocal, for it appeared to blend admiration, pity, and displeasure.—“The consideration at stake is far greater than you are aware of. Remember, that ‘*there is a tide in the affairs of man;*’ and now, at this moment, appears to me to be the flood of your future prospects. Embrace, therefore, the propitious crisis; for, if permitted to pass by unimproved, be assured it will no longer be within your grasp.”

The agitation of his auditor momentarily increased; rapidly he changed his station; yet though painful thought, corroding grief, or a wild expression of despair, marked his features, decision still kept dominion over them.—“I grieve, Mr. Lambert, to negative your well-intentioned counsel; but, to convince you how ineffectual will be the exertion of all your powers of persuasion, I will unbosom to

you the secrets of my breast. Know, then, my kind friend, that all my hopes of happiness on earth rest upon that very elucidation to which you urge me; that my whole soul is fondly devoted to the best and most amiable of her sex; but antecedent events, even before her birth, have given a colour to her mind, which severs, by my hand, the knot that would otherwise unite us, unless the mystery which hangs over me can be developed. If, therefore, I stand this hard test of my probity unshaken, you will easily conceive no other earthly influence can effectually operate. I shall doubtless become a martyr to my feelings; but if so, I bear with me the consolation, that I do so, secure in the possession of my integrity. Deem me not ungrateful for the interest you have evinced—indeed, I am fully sensible of the kindness; but I am ill, broken-hearted, and almost in despair. Claims, not to be superseded, detain me yet a few weeks in England. As soon as they are satisfied, I shall

shall bid these shores a last adieu; and, by returning to Bengal, bury myself and my miseries in a foreign grave.—Yet there is one question I am anxious to have answered:—May I venture to inquire that name to which you conceive I have a right?”

“No, Mr. Molesworth; that query I do not consider advisable to answer, except I felt certain of securing it as your’s *incontestibly*; for to give utterance to my impressions, my firm belief, I should probably spread destruction wide.”

He rose as he added, “Such being your determination, then, it were vain for me to say more. I can only respect, admire, and commiserate. Adieu, excellent young man! Heaven awarded your virtues a different sphere of action; but unavailing, I fear, will be all my efforts to establish your claim, without your own be united. Adieu! and may you never have cause to repent the relinquishment of my proposals!”

CHAP. XIV.

No more joy's sparkling ray illumines mine eyes :
My bosom heaves with deep, with ceaseless sighs ;
Amidst surrounding revelry I'm sad ;
Nought now can charm, nor ought can make me glad.

MISS PYE.

The Military Ball.

SEVERAL days intervened ere Lady Edgeworth was enabled to quit her room ; but health no sooner beamed once more upon her beautiful countenance, than a letter from Molesworth met her hand. It was written with all that pathos which his warm feelings could dictate, upon a subject whereon rested his hopes of future happiness.

ness. He offered unconditional forgiveness to all who might have wronged him; he held out every lure to tempt confidence, by promises of secrecy, of generosity, of liberality; but they were all unavailing.

The Viscountess signified her intention of replying verbally; and, entering the room where the suppliant waited, with an air of imperious disdain, thus addressed him:—"The words, Sir, to which I gave utterance, in a moment of physical indisposition, have been strangely misapplied by you. From the contents of this letter, which are at once insolent, presuming, dictatorial, and unfounded, I deemed it necessary to put an end to conjecture, as well as hope, as you may have conceived they rested with me. No letter from you will ever more be received by me; and this is the last interview which will ever take place between us.—Adieu, Sir, *for ever!*"

Molesworth sprang forward, if possible to detain her; but she was deaf to his en-

treaties, and the next moment disappeared from his sight.

Leaving our hero buried in the gloomy despondence of frustrated hope, we once more must direct the course of our readers to Sudley Hall, where yet resided the melancholy heiress.

Spring had decked the ground with the budding blossoms of renovated nature; but the tendrils of hope were yet buried in the winter of disappointed love, which froze the "genial current" of that benevolent heart, incased within the earthly tenement of distinguished beauty.

With the blessing of health, peace of mind returned not to Lady Zitella Herbert; the fine capacious powers of her soul became condensed in rooted anguish, immoveable from time, circumstance, and every effort of surrounding friends. An impression had taken full possession of her mind, that Clarence was in reality most warmly attached to Marian Ancaster; she viewed the action of resigning his claim to her

her own hand, to have originated in actual indifference, which a consciousness of feeling, which a sense of delicacy towards her, influenced him to conceal, had operated to produce the effect; in fact, that his better virtues had preponderated, and induced him eventually to surrender the wealthy heiress, rather than for ever destroy her happiness, when the discovery might become visible at a time the bonds of wedlock were for ever clasped.

At the reiterated entreaty, nay, almost command, of the revered friend of her deceased parent, our heroine had consented to emerge from solitude, when her health allowed her to quit the house. The invitations of the neighbouring families, to different parties at their respective mansions, had therefore been, for the last week, accepted; but the unfortunate Zitella was no longer the gay cheerful companion; repartee no more flowed from her lips, vivacity no longer gave bewitching eloquence to her eyes, the dimples of mirth

no longer sported around her lovely mouth; a saddened despair was the unvaried expression of her features; and, in general society, Lady Zitella Herbert was become like the statue of herself, cold and taciturn:—the soul of life was annihilated by the power of cruel, tyrannic, disappointed love.

Lord Arthur Craven was once more an inhabitant of Hillgrove Abbey; he often visited at Sudley-Hall; and he alone seemed to have power to rouse the feelings of Zitella from their deep despondence. She viewed him suffering from an attachment ill-fated as her own; and, in some respects, a similarity of destiny drew forth the interest of her bosom. She never recoiled from his presence with either annoyance or uneasiness; and even the tone of her mind seemed less acutely anguished in his society.

With sorrow his Lordship beheld the change which a few months had produced on the brilliant and attractive heiress. He
was

was ignorant of its source, at least in regard to the object; but he clearly perceived that it had arisen in a disappointed attachment of the heart, which had effected the melancholy alteration.

His whole soul sympathised with her's. The admiration he felt for this dear girl was derived from reason, not from love; for had it been the latter, convinced that her affections were not reciprocated, he would never have sought her hand; but aware that his own also were alienated, he felt that they met on equal grounds; and he judged too highly of the purity of her bosom, the steady rectitude of her principles, to have entertained a single apprehension for his wedded honour.

As a friend, however, he now only ventured to approach her; for he was aware that more marked profession would, at this moment, have only banished him decidedly from her society.

Tickets were, at this time, issued for a ball, given by the field-officers of a regi-

ment quartered in the neighbourhood of Sudley Hall ; and Major Hammond had not failed to dispatch the necessary invitations to the family of Dr. Moreland.

With infinite difficulty, Mrs. Mulgrave persuaded Lady Zitella Herbert to accompany Mrs. Moreland to the scene of festivity. Mechanically she dressed, mechanically she ascended the carriage, and mechanically she entered the ball-room.

Craven was of the party ; and as our heroine had declined dancing for the evening, he took a seat near her, and began talking on the subjects applicable to the spot, when an exclamation of surprise, if not of distress, issued from his lips, on beholding among the group Mr. and Mrs. Stavenant. The eyes of the former met those of the speaker ; and Lord Arthur considered himself compelled to advance, in order to greet them.

Maria was silent, almost repellant ; but her husband, as usual, friendly and affectionate, remarked not her conduct.

“ In

“ In Dorsetshire, my dear Stavenant!—so near Hillgrove Abbey, and yet not inform me of your vicinity!”

“ I only arrived this morning,” was the reply ; “ and was on the road to Holyhead, to embark for Ireland, where my presence is unexpectedly required on my estate, when one of our horses was taken ill ; and as I never, if possible, travel with any but my own, I proposed passing a few hours in this town, in the hope the poor animal would, by a day’s rest, be sufficiently recovered to assist in bearing the carriage onward. I almost immediately dispatched a messenger to the Abbey ; but he returned with the information that you were gone to dine at Sudley Hall, and from thence intended to proceed to a military ball in this town. Major Hammond, by chance, descried us at the inn ; and, being an old acquaintance, we of course became bidden guests to the festivity of this evening. Maria expressed unusual desire to accept the invitation ;

and I, anxious to oblige her, and gratify myself at the same time, by seeing an old friend, willingly complied."

After some conversation, painfully supported on the part of Craven, Mr. Stavenant was summoned to make the fourth at a whist-table, in an adjoining room; and, withdrawing the arm of his wife from his own, said, "I leave Mrs. Stavenant to the kind attention of your Lordship; for, with the exception of yourself and Major Hammond, I believe she is unacquainted with a single individual in the room."

And without waiting a reply, he turned away.

"I fear," said Maria, now almost for the first time breaking silence, in a low fearful tone, to which she knew how to give full effect—"I fear Stavenant has deputed you to the commission of a troublesome office—one productive rather of annoyance than pleasure."

"Maria——" and the voice of Craven
paused

paused on the beloved name, “surely you cannot entertain this cruel unjust impression! You know——”

“Yes, Craven,” she interrupted, “I know, alas! from experience, that when woman reveals the secret weakness of her heart, that heart is no longer valued; that men become indifferent, in the certainty of possession.”

Maria affected to retreat as she concluded this observation; but the movement was tremulous, the step indecisive, and the pensive sigh which heaved the lovely bosom of the enchantress, subdued the resolution of the devoted Craven.

His hand, ere he was sensible of the action, had locked hers within its tender pressure; his words were scarcely intelligible, from the incoherence of a love that yet writhed under the trammels of honour.

The voice of Maria was faint and imperfect; she complained of illness, and requested him to lead her through the crowd to an open window.

The

The very soul of Lord Arthur trembled as he felt the endearing form of all he loved resting on his arm; he recognised his danger in the ardent vibrations of his devoted heart; and he dreaded to trust his voice to address the wife of his friend.

They had approached the open window; it was in a distant part of the room from that occupied by the dancers; and as the spectators had crowded to that more immediate spot, no auditors broke the interest of this dangerous *tête-à-tête*.

The beauteous syren raised her eyes, with a look of despairing eloquence, on the starry firmament of the moonlight scene without.

Those of Craven were rivetted on her beautiful countenance; he stood as the self-condemned culprit, who contemplates the ardently-desired treasure for which he has bartered his peace of mind.

“A cloud passes over the planet that rules my destiny,” said Maria, “emblem
of

of the sombre fate of her who lives beneath its influence."

"Maria! beloved, dearest object of my heart's idolatry! speak not in this tone of anguish; my own griefs I have sustained in secret torture, but thine are beyond my fortitude to support."

He rested his head against the frame of the window; he spoke no more; he appeared to breathe no more; but, immovable as the monumental emblem of despair, he yet remained in this dangerous vicinity to the unworthy object of his love.

Maria stood for a few moments as if irresolute; then placing her hand on his, with timid tenderness she repeated, "Craven, why this anguish? *You* are innocent: to *destiny* alone I owe my wedded misery—yet twelve months since, and I was comparatively happy. Ah! why did I not refuse the entreaties of Stavenant to accompany him to England? Then I should never have learned the coldness, the indifference of him to whom I had resigned my warm,
my

my fond devoted heart. This alone was wanting to complete the measure of my affliction ; and you have cruelly rendered it an overflowing draught of bitterest woe !”

“ Alas, Maria ! ‘ coldness and indifference ’ could never meet the affections of your bosom, formed by Love himself to subjugate the heart of man ! Your presence, your very voice, communicates this vivid fatal passion. Cruel circumstance alone has compelled this painful effort to avoid you, Maria,” he added, in a firmer tone, as he averted his eyes from the dangerous contemplation—“ You are the *wife* of my friend !” and the heroism of his noble nature rose with this exertion of his principles ; and, borne away by the enthusiasm of honour, he subjoined—“ As such, I must shun you—as such, I *dare* not contemplate all I love——”

He attempted to move. At that moment he would have fled, and been worthy of his friend ; but, alas ! the hand of Maria, as it again rested on his arm, had influence
to

to banish the powers of reason. Its light pressure arrested the steps of *the immortal hero of a field of war*; he was subdued; irresolute he yet lingered.

“Can Lord Arthur Craven feel safety only in *flight*?” said Maria, while a half expression of contempt sat upon her coral lip—“The female bosom might own the coward thought, the coward fear; but you, my Lord, I weakly judged a more exalted being. I am deceived—nay, I have loved an inferior object.”

“Oh, Maria, think me not thus despicable, thus pusillanimous; I cannot endure that such an impression of me should find entrance in your bosom.”

Alas! the vulnerable part of the otherwise superior mind of the lover was assailed; the Circe knew it well; it was on this last effort that expiring hope kindled a renovated flame.

“No, I cannot, will not cast this painful reflection on the otherwise lofty excellence of your superior mind. Yes, Craven, I will

will yet believe you, nor do injustice either to you or myself, by a weak retreat."

Maria cast down her eyes, with all the tender softness that chastened virtue lends to the aid of beauty when it loves; and her unfortunate victim viewed it as the real emanation of her mind.

"Tell me, Craven," she resumed, "how have I deserved this impression, that you should think me thus base, degraded, and abandoned, as, under the influence of any circumstance, to become the criminal, guilty partner of your friend? Absent or present, you are equally dear, and my affections, I have confessed, are devotedly your's. Of these you have never robbed Stavenant, for of these he never was possessed. You alone were fated to awaken my heart to love—you, who have rejected, *abandoned* me!"

She leaned out of the window, as if for air; she raised a handkerchief, and covering her face with it, her frame became tremulous with emotion.

Zitella.

Zitella, from a distance, had viewed, although she had not heard, what passed in this dangerous scene ; she trembled for the honour of the unfortunate lover, the imprudent wife ; and when, at this moment, she was summoned to withdraw by Mrs. Moreland, whose carriage had already arrived, she cast a look of commiseration, of apprehension, towards the unhappy owner of Hillgrove Abbey. As a friend, she pitied the ill-fated sufferer ; as a more rigid observer, she would perhaps have only condemned him.

The next day passed ; but Lord Arthur Craven did not appear at Sudley-Hall ; and the following one, our heroine, with pain and alarm, learned that he had become the travelling companion of the Stavenants to Holyhead.

CHAP. XV.

The ways of Heaven,
Though dark, are just; and oft some guardian power
Attends unseen to save the innocent.

DRYDEN.

The Suicide.

THE chaise stood at the door of the lodgings of Molesworth, the succeeding day to that in which he had tendered his last parting adieu to his friends in town; the servant was busied in strapping on his trunk; and, with a heavy heart, Clarence stood at the window, gazing on his occupation with vacant eye, while busy memory yet lingered over those happy hours spent in the metropolis of England,

England, in the beloved society of his Zitella, ere he became awakened to the conviction of that fatal attachment, which had wrecked his peace of mind for ever.

Gloomy despair had nerved his soul to the present determination of quitting the Albion shores. A few days more would only intervene, ere, committing himself on the bosom of a tempestuous ocean, he should be separated far from all he held dear on earth. The ship in which he had secured his passage for India was on the point of sailing ; and he was now repairing to the port where it lay.

The servant entered, with the painful intelligence, the subduing words—"All is ready, Sir."

To those who have parted with regret, perhaps with anguish, from a spot endeared by tender recollections, by yet more fascinating associations of memory's fond delights, this sentence will in itself convey an impression correspondent to that which
filled

filled the breast of our unfortunate hero: to those who have not, this trite sentence will appear as nothing, a mere necessary summons to set out on a journey.

Clarence clasped his hands, with sudden, irresistible vehemence; he cast a look of unutterable anguish towards Heaven, and his countenance was convulsed by emotion as he rushed through the hall.

A liveried servant impeded his progress. He attempted to pass him; but the extended hand of the domestic presented a letter. He seized it, scarcely knowing that he did so, and hastily entered the chaise.

The packet was thrown beside him, and he had long past the suburbs of London ere it recurred to his memory. The superscription was to himself, but the hand unknown. He opened it with listless indifference. There was nothing on earth, he conceived, that could now impart a ray of comfort to his drooping soul. Whether he yet found that Heaven had still ought in
her

her bounteous store of blessings to impart, the reader may form his own judgment from the annexed letter:—

“ CHARLES, for the first and the last time, your mother addresses you on paper.—Ere you were capable of error, you became the child of my hatred—wherefore, the enclosed sketch of my life will now elucidate. The first part of it has been written very many years since ; but I reserved it for the fatal moment which has now arrived.

“ I am loaded with obloquy and disgrace. True, no *proof*, in the eyes of magistracy, could yet condemn me ; but my character is irreparably injured ; and the proud soul of Alzira disdains to live under the disgrace of public opprobrium. Her fame, her distinctions, her existence, are one, and cannot be sundered by earthly power. My feelings, my passions perhaps, have been wrought to desperation.

“ Mr.

“ Mr. Lambert, the guardian of Sir Horace Lister during his minority, has exerted his influence over the mind of this young man so successfully, that Lister refuses to suffer his wife to associate with me, her mother ; he has convinced him of the guilt your concealment attaches to me ; and this, united with the mysterious separation of a wedded pair, so fondly attached as Lord Edgeworth—Oh no ! at this awful moment, I dare not link your rights to him—as Edward and myself, has induced this determination. My weeping Flora has been torn from my arms once more ; she is told her mother is criminal, yet knows not why. If, therefore, I must sustain the humiliating ordeal, and the world’s dread condemnation, at least they shall learn the imperious motives, the irritating causes, which roused my unbending, arrogant soul to the execution of this momentous deed.—Yes, detested offspring of a hated father, to the latest moment of my existence, my heart refuses to acknowledge

ledge you as having a filial claim to its affections; and did I not believe the inflexible, unrelenting Lambert had power and inclination to authenticate your claims to the title and fortune of Edgeworth, I would still withhold from you this birth-right, to which I have owed the bitterest humiliation of my life.

“ Proclaim to the world my crime; but ere you know it, I shall be beyond its confines. Let them pause in horror over the tale. I wish not commiseration; but even in the depth of guilt, it is still my pride to be viewed as no common character, to act from motives incomprehensible to the tame feelings of those unambitious natures, who vegetate, and are as senseless in soul as the clay which forms its corporeal mansion.

“ The poison circulates through my veins, and my body writhes under torturing pangs; but the spirit is yet unsubdued. I have no Christian terrors; I acknowledge not the doctrines of your revealed religion; and I

doubt the reality of any other—Yet what means this terror that takes sudden possession of my mind? The creature of infidelity, shall she now first surmise the dread possibility of an hereafter? My blood chills as it glides through my veins! a coldness seizes on my heart! the career of the imperious Alzira lingers at its final close!—May it end in this world for ever, nor know an existence in another! for to imagine even the probability of this would be more than my dying soul could support, with that apparent fortitude it is my pride to sustain in the moment of dissolution—Yes, even yet——”

Horror benumbed the faculties of the deserted son. His own happy prospects were for a time unheeded, unregarded. His eyes, his clasped hands, his heart, were raised to Heaven, in all the enthusiasm of prayer for this guilty unrepentant parent; yet

yet the words of supplication faded on his quivering lips, for scarce a hope of mercy dared extend towards the crimes of this inflexible sinner.

CHAP. XVI.

“Darest thou, presumptuous, to invade my rights!”

A Persian Memoir.

“FATIMA was the only child of Ferdusi, a younger son of the family of the then reigning Shah of Persia, and was early instructed in all those feminine accomplishments for which her native spot is celebrated, while she possessed all that grace and elegance so peculiar to the Persian female.

She had also been, from infancy, initiated in all those arts which likewise appertain to them, to heighten that redundant beauty

beauty with which she had been gifted by nature; and as the Princess of Ferdusi was a Georgian, she inherited a brilliance of complexion, with which few Europeans could vie, as well as those peculiarly fine eyes which are generally attached to that country.

Her habits of life were luxurious in excess, and her habiliments formed of the most costly and expensive materials. Her passions were strong, and haughtiness supreme; but to these personal gifts, for no nymph of Ispahan could vie with the divine Fatima, when those of birth and fortune were united, it will naturally be supposed that the lovely Persian had numberless admirers. She was, however, extremely young, and treated with disdain her many vassals; till at length, war having been declared against the Shah, the Prince Ferdusi was appointed generalissimo of the forces, and the tremendous havoc of the sabre commenced.

As Fatima had lost her mother at her
M 3 birth,

birth, who had, contrary to the custom of her country, possessed the undivided affections of her husband, they had, in the literal sense, been bequeathed to her orphan; nor had she, from that moment, ever been separated from him. The idea of leaving her was therefore insupportable to the soldier; and he obtained especial permission that she should be suffered to accompany him.

Preparations were accordingly immediately commenced; and the Persian fair one, with an appointment suited to her rank, travelled in the suite of her father.

A decisive battle, however, laid the son of royalty at the feet of his English conqueror; and General —— received among his prisoners the lovely Fatima, who was not to be separated from the dead body of her father, as he had, at an early hour of the engagement, been conveyed to her arms, mortally wounded.

General ——, with that humanity and tenderness proudly ascribed to the British hero,

hero, raised the drooping maid. He loudly proclaimed the distinguished valour of her sire, and soothed her woes, by relating wonders of his personal prowess; for Fatima, in constant association with her warlike sire, had imbibed enthusiastic sentiments of heroism; and ere long she began to assimilate all the virtues of humanity in the gallant chief, who in his turn had been subdued by his fair Indian conqueror.

She listened to his tale of love, and eventually became his own. Ill health, the consequence of active service under the influence of a tropical sun, compelled his return to England, seven years from the period of his marriage, whither he was accompanied by his once fondly beloved Fatima, and myself, their only child, of six years old; but, sated with the charms of the Asiatic, the General had roved at large, and at length been attracted by the widow of a brother officer, who had fallen a sacrifice to the climate.

Thus the affections of the General for his legitimate connexions, had gradually subsided. Occasional separations had at first weakened the bond, and faded beauty in his Persian heroine eventually struck the final blow. The illicit connexion formed with Mrs. Revely, now governed his every action; and the first instance of her influence was the removal of a troublesome daughter, nearly the age of myself, beneath his roof, as the ostensible friend of his girl, and a spur to emulation in the hands of their governess. This event was decidedly against the inclinations of my mother; but, alas! the poor Persian belle had lost her influence, and her voice was raised in vain against the admission of Harriet Revely, whose blandishments, even in infancy, had gained unprecedented ascendancy over the mind of her benefactor.

No amity, however, subsisted between the young companions; for the youthful Asiatic regarded with sovereign contempt the dependant. Imperious from nature,
this

this trait of disposition had been, by my mother, sedulously nourished; nor did I, upon any occasion, fail to remind our plebeian inmate that royal blood flowed in my veins. I considered it, even at that early age, if not as a counterbalance for every defect of nature, at least as a palliative that all must admit.

Time rolled on, and we approached to years of maturity. The military rank of my father called for an aid-de-camp; and this situation was filled by Edward Edgeworth—the first, the best of human beings, in my eyes. He soon beheld me with partiality, but dared not look up to my elevation; while my whole soul, absorbed in ambition, regarded those who were considered as my equals with contempt. I saw the rising passion of Edgeworth; and I, as well from preference as coquetry, encouraged its progress. His cousin, the Viscount, was also our frequent visitor; but it was here a doubtful point whether Alzira or Harriet was the attraction. I was only

M. 5

goaded

goaded by vanity; but to her it was a matter of moment. She was poor, and of ignoble origin. She was yet an inmate beneath our roof, and in defiance of the expostulations of my mother, who now ascertained that connexion which formed the link of union, and had made every attempt within the scope of her ability to dismiss this object so annoying to her repose.

By degrees my heart became more and more attached to the graceful aid-de-camp; but I was aware of the views of my family; and even if they had accorded an acquiescence, I should have rejected the alliance myself.

The contention with regard to the Viscount still continued. Harriet's frequent hints and exulting language, left me no doubt of her impression as to his preference of herself. I was irritated; my proud soul could acknowledge, only in bitterness of resentment, a rival, where I had attempted an impression; and Harriet Revely, that rival, was the most galling creation could have

have presented, accustomed as I had been, from childhood, to view her with contempt and aversion.

The fortune of Lord Edgeworth was immense, and his connexions of the first consideration; and therefore did he alone arrest my attention. At length the important point was adjusted; my Lord declared himself my vassal, and was treated by me literally as such. The mortification and disappointment of Miss Revely was a matter of amusement, that divested the tedious hours of courtship of *ennui*. I smiled at her crest-fallen hopes, and derided her melancholy aspect. At length I became a wife; but my mind had undergone no change. I was perfectly indifferent to my husband; while all the affections of which I was susceptible were devoted to Captain Edgeworth.

The wretched Edward sighed in secret. I was conscious of my influence over him, and regardless of his fervent passion. The misery which he evidently suffered I ex-

M G

ulted.

ulted in, as the effect of my all-subduing charms, and was gratified by the certainty of possessing his noble heart exclusively.

Time still revolved on his certain course, and my mother paid the debt of nature; but all my affections were now otherwise devoted, and I scarcely felt the awful bereavement.

Six months after this, I became a mother myself; but no maternal feelings throbbed in my breast. The poor infant was consigned to the care of mercenaries. I loved not the father, nor did I feel the smallest interest for his child. I refused it that nourishment which nature had bestowed, and only regretted what it had already cost me.

One day that I was descending the stairs, I met a servant, with a letter in his hand. My Lord was absent; and concluding, as I had expected one by that post, that it was to me, without adverting to the address, I snapt the seal.

The first sentence nearly annihilated me.

It

It was written by my husband, and addressed to Harriet Revely, who had been, for the last three months, my visitor, as, since my marriage, I had been induced by my father to sanction his retaining her in his house, by this public support on my behalf.

The contents of the letter were to me most unexpected; they were clear and decisive. He unequivocally proclaimed, that, in a fit of jealous anger against his beloved Harriet, whom he conceived to have favoured the attractive Edward Edgeworth, he had made proposals to me; that she whose person, as a mistress, he had viewed with indifference, he now loathed; that Harriet, the detested, ignoble, despised dependant, had ever possessed his undivided affections; and concluded by proposing to receive the worthless, treacherous Revely in a country-mansion.

I will not comment on this letter: let my actions evince its effects on my imperious mind; let them illustrate my character.—I smothered my feelings, and,
closing

closing the letter, gave it again to a servant for delivery.

I now began seriously to reflect, in order to arrange my plan of conduct. I made no alteration visible in my manner towards Miss Revely ; and my Lord in three days after this returned. I was in my dressing-room, and the hour rather early in the day. The door opened, and he sprang forward to embrace me. I coldly withdrew from the attempt.

“ Wherefore, Alzira, this freezing reception?”

“ It originates, my Lord, from the union of two passions—contempt and resentment. You know me too well not to credit the assertion, that, from accident alone, the letter recently addressed by you to Miss Revely was opened by myself. You will not perhaps be surprised when I avow, that the contents have destroyed the respect I once may have entertained for your character ; that was the basis on which *alone* you rested ; and the artificial support removed,

removed, you sunk under well-merited contempt: but, in this dereliction from principle, you enjoy no triumph over me; nor has my *heart* been rejected by you; for you have never possessed it. I will withdraw the veil which has hitherto obscured me, and you shall see me as I am.—While I rendered you subservient to my views, it was a kind of gratitude that operated to their concealment; but the foundation is shaken, and the result is obvious.”

“ Stop, Alzira, for God’s sake, stop!—Suffer this ebullition of passion to subside, and hear my defence——”

“ It were an useless trouble, my Lord: yet you mistake—no ebullition of passion sways me now; they are all condensed, as I before told you, in contempt and resentment, and they have produced the avowal of the feelings of my heart—that heart has been long in the possession of another.”

“ *Of another!*”

“ Yes, my Lord, of another! It *never* acknowledged your influence; you were
only

only the convenient appendage of circumstance."

"Lady Edgeworth, this unblushing avowal of depravity will cost you dear."

"No, my Lord, I feel no such apprehension. The object of my affections is unknown to you, and will ever remain so. Your resentment is powerless where alone I am assailable. He is poor and dependent: hence my resolution never to have been his. I am proud and ambitious. From the hour of my birth, I have been tutored by a Persian; nor for an instant has my royal descent been effaced from my remembrance. The captive offspring of a king suffered herself to become the wife of an English warrior. Though at the head of his profession, yet this was a degradation, to which I have never felt reconciled. Judge, then, if I would have condescended to have united myself with a commoner of England?—No; I loved the *man*, but my pride soared above his rank. I knew that the expenditure of my family forbade the
idea

idea of any patrimony for me; I knew myself to be beautiful and accomplished; I supposed you attracted by these recommendations, I by your rank and immense fortune—the barter was fair. I expected, according to the laws of that country to which I am partially linked, *fidelity* and *truth* on your side; while your Lordship's honour, delegated to me, was a trust I held sacred; but although the latter is yet safe, and will be so, from the respect due *myself*, the discovery that the letter has produced leaves no claim upon my gratitude, or ought in which you alone are interested. The bond is cancelled, and never can be renewed. My indifference has subsided."

"Alzira, dear Alzira, hear me:—Look at our sweet blooming pledge of mutual love!"

"Rather, my Lord, of mutual convenience. Name not the boy; I almost hate the transmitter of *your* name and rank. He is your's; and henceforward you must fulfil the parental duty alone. I again remind you, that with the blood of India, which
flows,

flows in my veins, I inherit the revenge ascribed to my country. Henceforth I live for myself; I devote my heart to the object who first awakened its tenderness, and to you I am no more."

Lord Edgeworth attempted to expostulate; but I was deaf to his entreaties. I quitted the room; nor was I again visible until a late period the following day.

Miss Revely immediately left the house; nor did we ever after meet. An appeal was made to my father; but he declined entering the lists on either side—indeed, since the death of my mother, and my marriage, he had become wholly devoted to his *chère amie*.

To the world, Lord and Lady Edgeworth appeared as usual; our domestic dissention was unknown, unsuspected.

Several weeks elapsed, and again my husband sought a conference.—“Alzira, forgive this lapse of frailty; recant the cruel assertion you have made. However I may have been excited by the blandishments

ments of another to a temporary violation of fidelity, believe me, that Harriet Revely has never possessed an empire over my heart. You are yet its sovereign arbitress, and she but the light heroine of a transient inclination. It was simply to satisfy her vanity that I expressed myself as I did. I never dreamed of her as a wife, the honourable partner of my affections. Secure in the possession of your heart, I never knew, until your own lips pronounced it lost, how dear that heart was to my existence. Suffer me, Alzira, to consider that horrid, appalling declaration then made, but as the mere ebullition of a resentful desire to distress me. Retract those words; tell me you will once more receive my vows of future faith, of eternal constancy, and thy penitent husband will again press his beloved Alzira to his breast, with all the fervour of a warm and steady passion."

I spoke not; a *look* was all I deigned to tender in reply—a look that arrested the embrace I spurned.

"Alzira!"

“Alzira!” he pronounced, and, involuntarily awed by my manner, he drew back—
“my Alzira!”

“No, my Lord, *thy* Alzira no more! No light determination ever yet prompted an action of my firm nature; resolution never yet failed to one of the race of Ferdusi. I feel myself as born to wield the sceptre of command over a nation; and shall I then be powerless in subjugating one vassal Lord? I triumph in the discovery of the contradiction of your inconstant nature. I will believe you now sincere, fervent in your supplications; for it gratifies my imperious heart to imagine——”

“Suffer me to interrupt you, Lady Edgeworth. These proceedings lead to your destruction. The feelings of the heart out of the question, it would be better policy not to arouse the lion in me. You have hitherto found me mild and acquiescent; but if once irritated, you will discover I claim not the attribute of the gallese dove. Once
more,

more, and for the last time, I would remind you of the interest of your child."

"*My* child! rather say *your's*—and therefore do I now abhor him. Think you my bosom could now receive one tender emotion for the living image of a hated and despised husband? No; I cast him from me, as an alien to my heart; for my proud soul rejects ought that bears paternal claims ON THEE."

"Then hear *my* resolve:—*This 'despised,' this 'hated' husband yet* has extensive power over the proud descendant of royalty. *This* offspring of '*mutual convenience*' shall sway *thy* destiny. Unable to excite maternal feelings in thy bosom, I will awaken *fear*. Accustomed to all the delicacies of life, thou art unable to cope with its difficulties. Whilst I exist, the former thou mayest yet enjoy, from my inability, by the marriage claims, to arrest it; but if thou survivest, *this boy*, whom with unnatural fury thou disclaimest, shall wield the sceptre to which thy proud soul must bow.

bow.—Adieu, Madam! After this eclairsissement, we can only meet as enemies, wearing the mask of friendship. One home may occasionally receive us, to avoid publicity, which again, for ‘*mutual convenience*,’ may be best; but it will be deemed perfectly accommodating, if, when your Ladyship is in town, I may visit the country; or when Arcadian scenery becomes your preference, I may take possession of our metropolitan mansion.”

“Your scheme, my Lord, is an admirable one. My convenience will never obtrude on your’s, and a reciprocity of politeness will consequently be awarded.”

I haughtily bowed, and left the room.

CHAP. XVII.

Heaven, to whose all-piercing eyes
Lie open the most obscure recesses of the heart,
Is not to be deceiv'd by specious shews,
And ne'er forgets the murderer in his wrath.

HAYWARD.

The Persian Memoir continued.

“ My hatred of the infant daily encreased, insomuch that his very presence was hateful to me. The strong resemblance he bore to his father, in my eyes, or prejudice created it, added not a little to this perhaps unjust, but radical aversion. Years produced no effect. My Lord and myself seldom met; he continued to PROTECT Harriet Revelly,

Revely, and I continued firm in my resolve.

During this space of time, I resided principally at a family-seat of the Edgeworth family, situated on an estate of extensive dimensions. I considered myself as the sovereign of this territory, its tenants as my vassals ; I felt proud exultation in displaying even princely munificence ; and the homage of grateful respect which I received from the objects of my bounty, was the aliment which supported my liberality. I was revered, adored, by this numerous class of rustics. I was, in every respect, viewed as a superior. I felt a right to that consideration ; and it was one to which my heart was accessible.

It was during this period that my bosom yielded to the full force of love. Resentment against a husband I hated prompted its indulgence ; nor did it need this stimulus to burn with that passionate vehemence, of which every other feeling of my nature, in some degree, partook.

At

At length I was apprized, by a letter from a medical man in London, that my husband was considered dangerously ill; but as he expressed no wish to see me, I remained at Guildford Castle.

Three weeks elapsed, during which, alternate hopes and fears prevailed. The latter were realised, and he died.

For the first time during two years, I beheld the infant heir. Again the resemblance struck me, and I shrank from the detested representative. The will of my husband confirmed his threat so long since uttered, and I was left solely dependent upon this his offspring, from the day he attained his twenty-first year. Until then, my income was such as to render me all those comforts generally attached to my station, and which had been secured to me on my marriage.

Chance or design, soon after this event, threw once more in my way the object of my early preference, the aid-de-camp of my father, and now the presumptive heir of the infant peer. His attentions soon

led to the renewed conviction, that our attachment had been mutual. Without other tie on earth, all the affections that I possessed centered in this man ; but I was not aware of the influence he had acquired, until, presuming on the evidence I had afforded, he ventured a declaration of passion ; yet, although my heart bounded at the appeal made, I resisted its supplications. Pride forbade the union, and pride once more conquered. I ascribed my rejection to our mutual embarrassments of a pecuniary nature, for he knew not my resources, and he became dumb. He sought, and obtained a situation abroad, and immediately quitted England.

Some few months elapsed ; yet no alteration took place, until the guardians of the young Viscount requested that I would return to town with him, to complete and carry into effect the plan laid down for him by the will of his father.

They were ignorant of the family discord which had existed, and were anxious to
wave

wave some of the directions, which they thought bore hard upon *the mother*.

We were kindly and politely received by Mr. Lambert and his family; but my recent widowhood, and the delicate state of my health, were sufficient apologies for my total seclusion.

The detested boy was daily sent to offer his duty to his mother; but my present melancholy, from the actual state of my heart wrongly ascribed to have taken rise from a source foreign to the real, afforded, I presume, an apology for my entire neglect of him; at least, my dissatisfaction was unnoticed.

Mrs. Lambert, one morning, proposed to me a water excursion, for two days, but which was merely confined to the individuals who composed the family-party, with the addition of Mr. Ancaster, then the poor curate of a neighbouring village. Wearied with forming excuses, I gave an extorted consent; and upon the appointed morning

we got on board the yacht, and set sail, with a fair wind and fine weather.

The day was delightful, and my turbulent passions were somewhat softened by the sweet notes of the harp, upon which one of the juniors of the party excelled. Attracted by this, the nursery-maid of the young Viscount brought him on deck. Not until then did I know he was on board. The music of the spheres would not, at this inauspicious moment, have arrested my attention. I regarded him as the sole barrier between myself and happiness, affluence, and mutual love. If I had before hated him, where shall I find a word expressive of the sentiment to which he now gave birth? I sat looking at him with profound meditation; but at length, unable to endure those reflections to which he had given rise, I started from my seat, and, moving to a distance from the party, leaned over the side of the vessel.

Ancaster, whose eyes had been fixed
upon

upon me, although unobserved by me, arose also. He took the child, now four years old, from his nurse; and bidding her retire, as he would guard him, brought him up, and thus addressed me:—"Surely, Madam, when Heaven, in mercy, has granted you such a soother as this beauteous babe, you should endeavour to turn from the dark and cloudy aspect of the past, and view only the bright and pleasing which this presents."

And he placed the infant in my arms. It was the first time, for upwards of three years, that they had received him. The movement was involuntary that accorded acquiescence to his wishes.

"I will fetch your Ladyship a chair," he added, and quitted the spot.

The boy raised his eyes to my face; they were the peculiar features of his father. My heart recoiled at the burthen my arms sustained. Again obtruded the recollection that this life was all betwixt me and happiness. The opportunity was

tempting—I relaxed my hold—the child fell into the sea.

The scream which followed was not artificial ; for although, even at the moment, I would not have recalled the deed, yet nature, fortitude, or perhaps my nervous system, received a shock, and I fainted.

Upon my recovery, I found myself on a sofa in the cabin, surrounded by the little group from the deck.

Ancaster approached ; he emphatically pronounced, “ Madam, *the child is safe!*”

“ Gracious God ! how is that possible ?”

“ Only by the immediate intervention of Heaven,” he returned—“ The hand of Providence was extended ; the means employed were indeed strikingly singular, for we are indebted to the instinct of a *brute* for the preservation of his life—a Newfoundland dog was near, and seeing the *accident*, which threatened the existence of your child, sprang into the sea, and saved him ; though his hand is dreadfully lacerated,

ated, and the mouth of the animal will probably leave a lasting memento."

My eyes met those of Ancaster as he concluded, and I read therein his suspicions of the truth—indeed, the severity of his words were intelligible to me, although apparently unnoticed by any other.

I complained of continued illness, and was immediately conveyed to bed. We made for land, and at a late hour that evening, again reached the shore. My plea of indisposition offered a sufficient apology, and I was left unmolested to the care of my attendants. From them I gathered, that this Ancaster, whose discovery I dreaded, was a single man, and a needy one. I therefore took my measures accordingly.

Some few days having elapsed, and my health restored to its accustomed standard, I wrote him a note, requesting a private interview. The summons was acquiesced in, and it accordingly took place.

His manner was cold, repellant, perhaps insolent; but I meant to render him use-

ful, and I smothered my resentment. I soon brought him to avow his firm conviction of my design, with his abhorrence of the deed. I waved the immediate theme, and fixed his observation by detailing the particulars of my past life, with the motives which had actuated the passions which had influenced me.

A shuddering horror appeared to pervade him, as I closed my confession.

He was rushing from the room; but I arrested his steps—"If you accuse me, Mr. Ancaster, your assertion, failing of support, will be treated as an idle tale. Circumstances favour me.—At the moment the child fell, it was obvious to all that I actually fainted. No prior circumstance affords the clue to my motives—no subsequent one will implicate me. It is therefore in your power to save *his life*; and by an acquiescence in my scheme, you will become his preserver; if not, you have heard and seen too much, to doubt my future determination. Become his tutor; you shall both reside beneath my roof.

My

My influence with Mr. Lambert will render this plan feasible. I will retire to the country; and means will be adopted to render him, at our leisure, *dead to the world*. My near connexion with the Viscount, and your sacred office, will lull to rest suspicion. Let him hereafter be recognised by some other name; and thus shall I be rendered happy, and you independent; for you know my interest in the line of your profession, and it will not be exerted in vain. I have sifted your little history; and I know its complexion. I know that you are fondly, ardently attached, and without hope, save such pecuniary aid be afforded as will enable you to aspire to an union with the object of your affections. The means are now offered you. With yourself rests the future, which will receive its colour at your hands."

Ancaster hesitated; but the observation may, with equal propriety, be extended to one as to the other—the man who deliberates is lost.

I grasped the advantage I had gained, and eventually succeeded in binding him by an oath, firm and irrevocable, to the accomplishment of my wishes.

The business was soon adjusted:—the village curate became appointed to the rectorage of Guildford; he married his long-loved mistress; and the young noble was committed, at my intercession, to his care.

The rectorage was within a quarter of a mile of the castle in which I now resided; and in a few months, the more easily to effect our purpose, we commenced a tour with the young Viscount. Frequent change of place and attendants at length shewed us the opportunity to effect our purpose. The child was, from time to time, reported ill; and the farce concluded by a detailed account of his death. Mr. Lambert was summoned to attend the funeral honours; and the afflicted mother was not expected to appear during his stay.

My darling scheme brought to issue, I
now

now exerted all my powers for the reward of my coadjutor. The rectory of Guildford preceded still higher dignities; and, in process of time, the village curate, Mr. Ancaster, became Dean of L——. He now received under his roof the heir of Edgeworth, as Charles Moreton, the object of his bounty.

Edward, my humble aid-de-camp, was now summoned to take possession of his unexpected rank, and its appendages. Soon was this noble heart again offered to my acceptance—and now, having removed the only intervening obstacle, I became his wife.

He was indeed an excellent man; but there was an almost rigidity of principle in his ideas of right; and, to me, the exalted qualities of his mind always had appeared an over exercise of austerity of virtue. Never was there a more honourable character; for, as I have before observed, it was in the extreme; and he would have sacrificed the dearest hopes of his

N 6

heart,

heart, rather than have violated a single duty of life. He is the only being, in my *sejour* on earth, whom I ever saw practise this inflexible, this fixed devotion to the *minutiæ* of systematic duty, united with warm and fervent feelings—Yes, the sentiments of his heart were at once glowing and energetic; he was ever passionately devoted to his Alzira; while she, on her side, scarcely lived but in his presence.

In process of time, I gave a daughter to his doating arms. It was then, for the first time, I felt the tender throb of maternal affection; for this child was the offspring of love, and my ardent nature warmly embraced the cement of a bond, which linked me to an adored husband.

Our Flora was mutually idolized, and this blooming cherub was our constant companion. Often as my Edward would thank Heaven for the blessings he possessed, in the object of his early only love, and the offspring of this sacred connexion, when fervent ejaculations proclaimed his
sense

sense of benefits received, then did the corroding scorpion of conscience poison the cup of felicity—often have I withdrawn from a presence I could not support, to the sanctuary of my private closet, and there, in bitterness, bewail the necessity of my manifold transgressions. But amid all this, repentance reached not my heart; for I would not have revoked the deed, even if I could.

The Persian worshipper of the sun would have exulted in the effect, if the dread of detection had not beat the alarm to my fears.

Eight years teemed only with bliss to my beloved Edward, who, in becoming the husband, still felt all the devotion of the lover: but my life flowed not thus serenely, for I lived in perpetual terror; and although my domestic attractions would have superseded every other, yet I was compelled to bury in a crowd obtruding fears.

A constitution naturally delicate, at length began to give way, and a violent
illness

illness followed too frequent exposure to night-air, and the round of dissipation in which I lived.

I received, for the first few days, neither medicine or nourishment, but from the hand of my well-beloved. Reason, however, was at length subdued, by the ravages of fever, and a frightful delirium ensued. I recollect no more for many a weary day; but the first being that renovated intellect hailed, after a deep sleep, was the object of my incessant care—I beheld Edgeworth seated in my room, but no longer the being I had last consciously beheld. Horror, grief, sickness, *death*, seemed stamp'd upon his countenance. I shrieked aloud.

He started from his attitude of meditation, and flew to my bedside.

“Edward,” I frantically exclaimed, “wherefore this change? what has been the cause? Oh tell me, tell me; relieve my tortured heart!”

He grasped my hand—“I have been ill, very ill; but I am now better. Compose yourself,

yourself, Alzira, and suffer no alarm on my account."

The request was unavailing, impossible. My nurse appeared; her presence had been, she told me, nominal, for that my Lord had never left my room.

I insisted upon his retiring to bed. I declared myself better—well.

He at length acquiesced. Day succeeded day, and I saw him not. He was ill, and forbidden to be disturbed. I feigned myself much more advanced to convalescence than I really was, and at last obtained permission to visit him. The fever, which, with him, had at first raged high, now settled into a decided attack on his nerves. I was told the dreadful state of his spirits was the natural consequence, and I was lulled into security. My own health was now perfectly re-established; but that of my husband yet bore alarming symptoms.

My cherub Flora was one day in the arms of her father. His head rested on her shoulder, and tears bedewed his cheeks,
when

when I unexpectedly entered the room. In vain I sought the cause; heavy groans only answered my inquiries. At length my girl broke silence:—"My dear mother, I am glad you have discovered us. My father weeps over me every day and every night; but as you were ignorant of it, I could not bear to distress you by the communication."

Lord Edgeworth turned towards her—"My dear Flora, leave the room. I wish to speak to your mother."

The sobbing child obeyed. I sat immoveable. My husband for some moments in vain attempted to articulate. At length, in almost unintelligible language, he addressed me:—"Alzira, you need no profession from my lips to assure you of the affection which I have ever borne towards you. Are you convinced of this?"

"Oh yes—yes, my Edward, well do I know it all: Then wherefore this smothered grief?"

"My grief is indeed heavy, insupportable ;

able; but no longer will it be smothered. Can you call to mind the particulars attendant upon the early *death* of the infant heir? Are you prepared, Alzira, for an investigation of every *minutiae* of his whole life—of his actual demise?”

Terror, I well knew, had blanched my cheeks; the blood appeared to recede from the seat of existence; I gasped for breath —“Wherefore, my dear husband, these strange interrogatories, and what can have given rise to these wild queries?”

“Oh, Alzira, too fatal are the proofs, too sure the conviction!”

Secure in the oath long since registered of my only confidant, I felt, on recollection, satisfied that suspicion alone could attach. My all was at stake; I summoned resolution, and, with as much firmness as I could command, I attempted to divert the conversation, and wave the direct interrogatories.

“I am not,” he solemnly resumed, “to
be

be deterred from the investigation—Alzira; am I not an usurper?”

My lips moved; but I believe no sound issued.

“Unnatural mother, cease! In the delirium of your illness, you have to me revealed the whole——”

Horrible convulsions extended my frame senseless at his feet. For three days my life was despaired of. I knew the purity of Edgeworth’s heart, and I was satisfied it would burst the bond of union with the devoted Alzira. Slowly recovering, I yet sought to rest a feeble hope on his long-cherished affection, upon the fatal proof I had afforded of my adoration, and, lastly, upon the influence of our Flora.

I sought and obtained an interview; but his resolves were fixed. Despair had taken possession of his soul; and he now avowed, not only his intention of instant separation, but, alas! tortured me to madness by his determination to rob me of my child. By turns

I supplicated

I supplicated and raved. He was assailable by neither channel. He renounced all claim upon the princely fortune I had secured him ; and only reluctantly consented to retain the title, from the wish to conceal my crime, and from its otherwise extinction, for I found that he entertained no doubt of the actual decease of the young heir. But, in his eyes, I knew I should appear equally guilty, in consideration of the attempt, as if success had crowned the deed.

Yet had I, even under the influence of delirium, concealed the name of my accomplice ; for conceiving, that while I in reality was addressing my husband, I was only recapitulating particulars to him, no artifice could extract the name, which had hitherto been buried.

Still my proud soul soared aloft ; and let the consequences have been what they might, in regard to softening the heart of Edgeworth, I would yet have firmly retained the secret that the lawful heir still existed ;

existed ; for well I knew the rigid honour, the austere virtue of my husband ; for he would have suffered no weak pusillanimous sentiment to have deterred him from re-establishing the rightful claimant ; and, with the knowledge of his own innocent usurpation, he would have resigned all to him whose birthright he had superseded ; and the hated offspring of a former husband would, by his means, again bear sway over a disgraced and now abhorred parent.

The fatal day at length approached, when he had announced to me his intention of withdrawing both himself and his child from beneath the roof which I inhabited ; but where shall I find words to pourtray the scene ?—My Edward, my Flora disappeared, and I was left, the veriest wretch in creation.

That wealth I had so dearly purchased was relinquished to my use ; while the pittance of the poor aid-de-camp was all he would retain.

I must

I must hasten over this part of my narrative—I shudder at the retrospect. Lord Edgeworth and his daughter quitted town, for the miserable deserted Plain of Salisbury, and took possession of a patrimonial dwelling, appertaining individually to the former.

I plunged into all the gaieties of the metropolis, and sought to banish reflection; but it would not do. In my happiest moments, the form of the hated, yet injured heir, obtruded on the festive scene; and often have I retired from the ‘busy haunts of men,’ to brood over secret grief. One appalling idea forcibly pursued me:—the ardent devoted love I bore my Flora seemed as if implanted by an avenging Power, as an awful judgment on that failure of maternal duty I owed my first-born. Yet my mind never lost its firmness of action; it had a stedfast tone, that failed not in the execution of a resolve once formed. In pursuance of this, I was compelled to effect
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the immediate removal of the real Viscount from the house of his *ci-devant* tutor.

The Dean very reluctantly accorded to my orders; but he was now in my power. He knew that discovery would alike blast his character as my own; and I had sinned too deeply, to hesitate at this last security. I left him to frame his own excuses for the deed; but for India I had decided he should embark; and he did so.

I have seldom ventured an inquiry; but my last account announced ill-health, and apprehensions for his life. Would that they had been realised, and no claimant yet existed to hurl destruction around by his identity! Still, under all my merited punishment, I feel that I have not deserved the cruel banishment of my Edward; *his* hand should not have dealt the blow, should not have wrested from me my only prop, the last ray of hope to which I clung.

My appeal to his affection, as a husband
and

and a father, has been once more urged, in vain. In disguise, I invaded his retirement; on my knees, I implored his compassion. My proud heart throbs at the degradation.

He bore me to a closet; he drew aside a curtain; he told me to behold the object of his constant meditation, the object with which he steeled his heart against the dangerous incitement of an unworthy, though idolized love.

I cannot recal the fatal picture critically to my memory. One figure, however, of the group, I remember, with yet appalling sensations; for I traced thereon my own lineaments—I traced this inscription:—“THE MATERNAL INFANTICIDE!” and horror, annihilated hope of the restoration of my adored husband, dimmed the optics of sight.

The era of love is past. True were all my fears; vain were the appeals of his devoted Alzira: solemnly has he sworn never to see her more. Resentment now
divides

divides my heart with him ; and I would gladly inflict pangs, such as he has made me suffer—I would sever him from his idol; I would tear from his adoring arms his darling Flora——”

CHAP. XVIII.

Thus have we swept suspicion from our seat,
And made our footstool of security.

SHAKESPEARE.

The gloom that overspread our morn
Is thus dispers'd ; our late mishaps
Recall'd, shall be th' amusing narrative
And story of our future evenings, oft
Rehears'd.

HARTSON.

The Farewell of our Heiress.

RESTORED to the power of coherent reflection, our hero once more returned to London, and instantly proceeded to the house of Lady Edgeworth, in the vain hope

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of

of reaching it ere her final dissolution had occurred; but as he ascended the steps, the door opened, and Mr. Lambert appeared; who, taking his arm, was leading him back, when the former exclaimed, "Detain me not an instant, Sir; I cannot quit this spot until I have endeavoured to see Lady Edgeworth."

"That you never can, for Lady Edgeworth no longer exists in this world."

The estimable youth pressed his hand to his forehead, but spoke not. . He suffered Mr. Lambert to lead him towards his carriage, and they ascended it together.

The shock had been great to the heart of Charles, and grief for the manner of the Viscountess's death added many a pang to the feelings of her son; for personal affection, respect, or esteem, it was impossible he could have entertained for that wretched woman.

As it was wholly out of the question that he could quit London at this awful period, he contented himself with writing
a faithful

a faithful account of the past and present to his beloved Zitella, to whom he could once more look with renovated hope. The narrative of the erring Alzira was committed to her, as a sacred trust; and, taking up the thread where he had been committed to the care of Mr. Ancaster, he expatiated upon his parental affection during early youth; and that although he had been sent to India by that gentleman, he well knew it was against his inclinations, though he knew not, at the time, the influence under which he acted; but that even then, his exertions had not been wanting to place him under the most respectable auspices; for, in leaving England, he had been told that it was a lasting adieu.

After a residence, however, of some years, ill-health assailed him, and his native clime had been recommended as the only possible chance of a recovery. This had been communicated to the Dean, after a consultation of medical men, at their ex-

press desire, and had been acquiesced in by his guardian ; who, however, aware that the consent of Lady Edgeworth would never be obtained to a step she would naturally conceive pregnant with danger to herself, he was compelled to require his entering into a solemn engagement never to acknowledge any previous acquaintance with his family, to render no account whatever of himself, and, assuming the name of Clarence Molesworth, bury in that his former appellation of Charles Moreton. Hence his distress at seeing this very letter in the hands of our heroine, having accidentally dropt it, after at least the fiftieth time of its perusal. These conditions were acquiesced in, and Clarence Molesworth once more reached the shores of Albion.

This elucidation accounted for many incidents, which had thrown at least a doubtful shade over the character of our hero, in the perverted optics of " the heiress ;" but now that "*equality of birth, fortune, and worldly considerations,*" enabled him to
lay

lay claim to the attention of our heroine, without the shadow of unworthy apprehension that ought, save individual attachment, was the stimulant to possession, he again ventured to become an energetic pleader for the hand and heart of his well-beloved.

Need we declare the acceptance of his proposals? Need we affirm, that dimpled smiles, vivacious eloquence, laughter-loving mirth, and eventual happiness, were the final portion of Lady Zitella Herbert? But lovers approve not listeners at a *tête-à-tête*; and we will therefore not intrude on those moments of halcyon delight.

Would that we could equally proclaim the renovated tranquillity of Lord Arthur Craven! Alas! the presumptive reliance on his own rectitude, his own honour, which the wily Maria had artfully aroused, proved the bane of his existence; but, in becoming the victim of guilty passion, reason could not endure the tortures of remorse, of self-condemnation: sunk beneath the conviction of his own treachery

towards the confiding friend of his early youth, a wretched maniac is all that is left of the once brilliant intellect of Craven; the genius of the house of Somerton is annihilated, by the derangement of that mind, once the arrogant boast of his lofty soul.

Mrs. Stavenant still exists, as yet unsuspected; but, sooner or later, truth will pierce the veil of hypocrisy, and the hour of retribution eventually arrive to the guilty Maria. Her estimable deluded husband, happy in his ignorance, sighs over the malady of his poor fallen friend, nor dreams of its fatal cause.

The prediction of Zitella was verified, in the course of twelve months after the death of Mr. Nugent, by the receipt of a curiously written and very "*dutiful*" letter to her, from Giles Dobbins, avowedly to ask her consent to his marriage with Mrs. Nugent. The genuine expressions of affection from this son of nature for the young companion of his boyish days, was simple and pleasing
to

to the fair orphan. She readily granted her assent; and felt that the really well-meaning Fanny would, at last, be rendered happy, by moving, for the future, in that sphere for which nature and habit had alone fitted her; while she experienced a hope, that the beauteous driver of Farmer Dobbins's pigs would, in sinking the name of Nugent, in some respect, lessen the living testimony of the folly and error of the unfortunate election of her uncle.

The delighted family of Dobbins secured to themselves, in their newly-elected member, the affectionate and grateful child of their early adoption. The fortune of Mrs. Nugent, though a little mine of wealth, was, to do justice to these worthy peasants, by no means a first consideration; although its generous owner, previous to her marriage, bestowed, beyond her own recal, a sufficient portion of it on the good old man, to render the business of his farm, for the residue of his days, rather a matter of

amusement, than, what it before had been, of painful toil and anxious fear; while the thrice happy Giles has become a considerable grazier, in his native county; and as his beautiful wife is driven by him to the neighbouring church each Sunday, in their one-horse chair, she casts not a sigh of regret on the costly equipage of the nabob's lady; but, in happy mediocrity, this honest couple bear on their faithful countenances the peace and content which dwell in their worthy bosoms.

The melancholy fate of the wretched Lady Edgeworth was received by the poor recluse with pious resignation; for he was mercifully kept in ignorance of the daring act which had freed her from mortal coil. His heart was, in some measure, relieved of the weight of woe which had so long bound him to the earth; for the incoherent ravings of wounded conscience, in the delirium of illness, which we have before recited, led to the horrid conviction, that the guilty mother
had

had actually effected her purpose in the destruction of her own offspring, while the feelings of nature recoiled at the ruthless deed.

Regarding her, therefore, as the destroyer of infant innocence, by her own apparent confession, and corroborating circumstance, we can no longer wonder at the effect upon a mind which was the seat of benevolence and virtue, who had rested all its hopes of terrestrial bliss upon the object of an early attachment, and whom the conviction of reciprocal affection united in the social bond of wedlock, endeared and cemented by an early blossomed pledge of love, who was mutually idolized.

What then were the agonized feelings of this wretched man, when the veil of deception was rent, and he beheld the real deformity of his Alzira! when, too, as a father, he was forced to acknowledge the cruel necessity of withdrawing his child from association with a criminal parent! and he
trembled

trembled lest she should inculcate her own demoniac passions in the breast of his beloved Flora; and he also dreaded that the affections of this dear girl, by frequent intercourse, would, by becoming closely rivetted to a mother, whom she fondly loved, render too severely acute those pangs which would hereafter accompany a possible discovery of her crime, should the fatal secret ever be revealed at any future hour, guided by the retributive hand of justice.

The effects of these reflections we have detailed; but we dare not attempt a delineation of the feelings which dictated them.

The presence of the rightful heir of the honours of the house of Edgeworth was rather pleasing than painful to their late possessor; it gave the joyful certainty to his heart, that murder in actual commission did not attach to his Alzira.

Our hero felt gratified at this impression being connected with his presence, in the
breast

breast of this excellent man, the guardian protector of a beloved object; and both himself and Zitella were anxious to sooth, although they could never hope to efface, that weight of woe which had been the companion of many preceding years.

The melancholy inhabitant of Heath-House regains not the exhilarating powers of cheerfulness over his mind; but time must ameliorate the acuteness of sensibility; while the frequent society of his beloved Flora, and her really amiable husband, reconcile him to existence, in the contemplation of their wedded happiness; while the prospect of an infant claimant to his affection promises to prove another source of consolation to his wounded heart.

* * * * *

The important day which was to seal the destiny of our hero and heroine,

“and in one fate
Their hearts, their fortunes, and their being, blend,”

now

now drew near; and, at the eve of its commencement, when Mrs. Mulgrave, ere she retired for the night, with much affectionate emotion, addressed our orphan—
“And now, my young friend, here let the germ of *suspicion* be for ever crushed, nor again suffer this poisonous weed to sully the blooming parterre of connubial happiness. Believe me, Zitella, that the passing events of time gain colour from the reflection of the mind. Life is, in general, but a camelion, whose sombre or brightest hue arises from the light in which we view its surface.

“*The miseries of an heirress,*” my dear girl, “have been principally the creation of your own imagination. You have failed in the virtue of *Christian charity* to half the human race, while you have been *indiscriminately* profuse of your wealth to the other; you have given without judgment or circumspection; you have frequently been deceived; and you have suspected, from a general habit of doubting, from
effects

effects which have often arisen from causes originating in yourself. The first is the generous foible of youth; the latter is an error of age, engrafted on a juvenile stock.

“Never forget, that fatal unjust *suspicion* had nearly wrecked, not only your own happiness, but that of him you most dearly prize. Efface, then, these unworthy doubts, which, in the mistress, were so painful, so destructive—May they be eternally banished from the bosom of the wife! May each accept as sincere, and prove as faithful, those vows tendered on the sacred altar of our church, and registered in the house of God! nor ever obliterate this axiom from your mind, *That it were preferable to be thrice deceived, rather than unjustly condemn one innocent individual!*”

The happy lovers mutually embraced their sage and venerable mistress. The jealous Edgeworth and the suspicious Zitella renounced their former errors, in
the

the conviction of the attendant danger; while our heroine, in becoming the partner for life of the man of her heart's fond election, for ever annihilated *The Miseries of an Heiress!*

FINIS.

Lane, Darling, & Co. Leadenhall-Street.

WORKS

Printed at the Minerva-Press,

With the Reviewers' Opinion.



CELIA IN SEARCH OF A HUSBAND,

BY A MODERN ANTIQUE.

THIRD EDITION.

2 vols. 8vo. 12s. boards.

After reading in the Preface to this Novel, a kind of confession that it was written in haste, in order to be first in the market, after the impression made by *Cœlebs*, we were not a little surprised to find it a production of so much merit.

It is neither an answer to *Cœlebs*, nor a ridicule, nor an imitation of it; unless, indeed, the heroine, Celia Delacour, should be compared to Lucilla Stanley. It is a pointed and well-written satire upon the follies and vices of fashionable life, as contemplated by Celia, in a visit to her *tonnish* sister in London. Celia is not literally in *search of a husband*, nor does she find one, in London. She was not indeed likely to find one, suited to her taste and feelings, among such creatures as she there encounters. We are extremely sorry to say, that, as far as our knowledge of fashionable life goes, the picture is generally like. We say it with the more sorrow, because we know it to be very possible, that the vices and follies of one important class may bring down the very worst evils upon the whole community. It is true, indeed, that we know of some eminent exceptions to the general censure, but what are a few exceptions, when corrupt example so abundantly prevails?

The anonymous "modern antique" is announced in the preface as a female. Whether this be the fact or not, is of little consequence; the writer is ingenious, and appears to have correct views both of what is and what should be. Instead of satirising *Cœlebs*, she or he speaks of that work in the most cordial terms of admiration. *British Critic*, Oct. 1809.

New Works, &c. continued.

The Authoress of these Volumes has so pretty an Apology, in so diffidently hesitating a manner, for the 'presumption' displayed in the title-page, and for the many errors which, she fears, may be discerned by the keen eye of criticism in her performance, that we will promise, in direct violation of our bounden duty, to let both the one and the other pass unnoticed.

'Coelebs,' she says 'had appeared; *it would be answered*; but it must be answered directly.'

A snarler would perhaps say to the lady, 'Where is the necessity? — another might be tempted to ask her 'Where is the answer?' For ourselves, we have looked a little farther, even into the next page of her book, where we are told to 'consider that what is sport to *us*, is death to her;' upon which we can only assure her, that she is mistaken in the opinion she has formed of our character, and that we have no sport in the death of any fair lady whatever.

We shall therefore conclude this article, not in the language of censure, but in that of panegyrick. So far from agreeing with the lady in a sentiment which her modesty only could have suggested, so far from thinking that the pious book above mentioned is a specimen of such transcendent genius, that 'a long life, even blessed with *superior talents*, would scarcely produce a work whose *intrinsic* worth could class it with that performance;' we are of opinion that 'Celia in search of a Husband' is direct evidence that a life, not, we imagine, very long, nor yet blessed with any *great* superiority of endowments, is sufficient to produce a work whose *intrinsic* worth sets it very far above the said performance. For, although 'Celia' may want discrimination of character, strength of language, and force of reasoning, which the said performance is asserted to possess, we have not discovered in her the want of infinitely higher and more estimable qualities, those of christian humility, and christian charity. She does not impiously pretend to be so far favoured with a knowledge of the inscrutable designs of Providence, as to point out with certainty the objects of future indignation and mercy. She neither arrogates to herself an undoubted election to eternal happiness, nor, equally undoubting, denounces everlasting damnation against 'such good-natured creatures as Mr. Flam.'

Crit. Rev. Oct. 1809.

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